



Mr. Meade

The Adventures of a Man of Science by Mrs. L. T. Meade & Clifford Halifax

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The Adventures of a Man of Science by Mrs. L. T. Meade and Clifford Halifax
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The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveller. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

I.—THE SNAKE'S EYE. TOLD BY PAUL GILCHRIST.



HAVE met with strange adventures in my time, and none perhaps queerer than the story I am just about to relate.

The Crossthwaites were old friends of mine, and amongst them I had no greater favourite than the pretty Lady Pamela. She was a motherless girl of great beauty, and when first grown up had gone through much trouble owing to an unlucky love affair. A certain Laurence Carroll, a penniless subaltern in a line regiment, had conceived a desperate passion for her and she for him. There had been exciting scenes, for the young people had sworn to be true to each other in spite of obstacles. Carroll was a gentleman by birth, but somewhat harum-scarum and reckless in character. He had already contracted debts to a considerable amount, and was, in the eyes of her family, no suitable match for Lady Pamela. The Earl of Attrill forbade him the house—Lady Pamela broke down and had a somewhat severe illness, but in the course of a year had recovered her normal health and spirits. I had been consulted at the time of the Carroll trouble, and was, therefore, sincerely rejoiced when the news of Lady Pamela's engagement to the right man reached me.

She had now to all appearance given her whole heart to a certain Captain Mainwaring, a well-known traveller and a particularly brave officer. He had money of his own, and a character without a flaw. He was twenty years older than his pretty young bride, but that fact mattered nothing in the eyes of her relations.

At Lady Pamela's earnest request I had promised that no scientific work should pre-

vent my being present at her wedding. She was to be married with much ceremony early in February of this present year 1896. The wedding was to take place from the Crossthwaites' town house in Portland Square, and the bridegroom arrived on leave of absence from his regiment in India just one week before the wedding. He was a tall, fine-looking, soldierly man, and Lady Pamela's friends congratulated her on all sides. These congratulations rose to a sort of *furor* of enthusiasm when it was discovered that, amongst other presents, the soldier had brought for his future bride's acceptance a diamond of extraordinary size and brilliancy.

The night after Captain Mainwaring's return from India, I dined at the Crossthwaites', and after dinner was permitted to see the gem. It reposed on a velvet bed under a glass case, and stood on a centre table in the room where the other wedding presents were displayed. This room was not only guarded by a detective from Scotland Yard, but also by a manservant, an old retainer of the family, who was supposed never to leave it except when the detective was present.

The diamond presented a strange and almost startling appearance: it was cut in the form of a cobra's eye, with some scintillating rays in the centre which not



"YOU WOULD LIKE TO HEAR THE STORY OF THAT QUEER DIAMOND?"

inaptly represented the pupil; it was set in a thin gold socket, and looked like an eye of evil and strange import as it glittered on its purple bed. In addition to the value which its queer shape and unique appearance gave it, the stone itself was of great intrinsic worth, as it weighed over thirty carats. One glance was sufficient to show me that it was of the first water and was free from the least clouding or imperfection—in certain lights it gave out a blue, in others again a red, colour.

"You would like to hear the story of that queer diamond?" said Captain Mainwaring, coming up to my side when he saw me examining the gem.

"It certainly presents a unique appearance," I answered. "It must have a history."

"It has—it is in reality one of the eyes of an Indian idol. It was given to me by a Rajah whose life I had been instrumental in saving. When he presented me with the gem he made a queer request.

"It belongs to a tribe with whom I and my people have had a life-long quarrel," he said. "It is, as a glance will show you, the eye of a cobra—we call it in Hindustani Sānp Kee Ankh, which means the Snake's Eye. The money value of this stone is immense, but I run considerable danger by having it in my possession. In fact, I should be glad to be rid of it. If you are willing to take the responsibility, you shall have it on a condition."

"I told him," said Captain Mainwaring, "that I was not a nervous man, and that I would gladly accept the responsibility of such a valuable possession.

"You saved my life, and I owe you something," replied the Rajah. "The stone shall be yours if you will take my servant, Gopinath, as its guardian. I do not wish to have your blood on my head, and you would assuredly never reach England in safety if Gopinath did not take care of the diamond for you. He is a Brahmin, a valuable and excellent fellow. He will serve you day and night, and will protect the gem. Take him with you to England. While

he remains in your service the diamond is safe."

"As he spoke, the Rajah lifted a curtain and Gopinath appeared. He was a good-looking fellow, tall, with the sleek skin, sinewy frame, and glowing, jewel-like eyes of his countrymen. I happened to be in need of a servant, and gladly accepted the guardian with the gift. Gopinath has accompanied me to England, and is so much attached to me and to the Snake's Eye, that I do not think we are likely to part for many a long day."

"You suffered no hair-breadth escapes, then, in travelling down the country with a gem of such value?" I asked.

"I believe I did, several—but Gopinath was always to the fore. I have not the least doubt that my Brahmin stood between me and death on several occasions."

Other guests now crowded round the glass case, and Mainwaring entered into a fresh description of the gem, the Rajah, and Gopinath for their benefit. I only listened with half an ear, being absorbed in contemplation of the splendid stone itself.

"How do you like the idea of a Brahmin bodyguard?" I said, turning to Pamela, who came up at that moment.

"Do you mean Gopinath?" she answered, with a laugh; "I think him a delightful person." She turned her sparkling eyes full on my face.

"I should like to see him," I said.

"He is in the house: I will fetch him at once," she answered. She ran off, returning in a few moments with the Brahmin, wearing a gorgeous turban and elaborately attired in



"HE GAVE A LOW SALAAM."

the rich colours of his country—he gave a low salaam as the young girl introduced him to me. His glittering eyes turned from her face to mine, then I saw them light upon the stone itself with a peculiar expression. A moment later he had vanished into a shady part of the room.

“That gem, beautiful as it is, will be a white elephant,” I said, to Pamela.

“Herbert means to have it re-set, and I

be his wife—her eyes met his for an instant, then she looked towards the door. In a moment the whole expression of her face altered—it grew white, and she clutched hold of the nearest chair as if to support herself. A lady came up to speak to Captain Mainwaring, who turned to reply to her courteously. At the same instant I saw a tall man, with a pale face and somewhat nervous expression, come hastily forward.



“THE WHOLE EXPRESSION OF HER FACE ALTERED.”

I knew him at once, and his appearance at that moment startled me not a little—he was Pamela Crossthwaite’s old lover, Laurence Carroll. He went straight to her side, and held out his hand without uttering a word. The troubled expression in her eyes grew more marked, and, in spite of all her efforts, she was really trembling violently. Captain Mainwaring turned towards her again; with a great effort she seemed to recover herself, and laid her hand on his arm.

“Let me introduce you to my friend, Laurence Carroll,” she said. “Mr. Carroll—Captain Mainwaring.”

The Captain bowed, and favoured Carroll with a brief glance—the slight nervousness left Carroll’s eyes—they grew bright and steady. He began to talk eagerly, and so did Pamela. The conversation once again turned upon the diamond. Captain Mainwaring unlocked the glass case and, taking the gem in his hand, gave it first to me and then to Carroll to examine. We were exchanging opinions as to the beauty and rarity of the stone, but when he thought no one was observing him, Carroll’s eyes followed Lady Pamela, who had left us, with a queer resolve growing stronger and stronger in their depths. It needed but a few glances to show me that his passion was as strong as ever. Presently Lady Pamela and her friends approached the part of the room where he was standing. She was passing him

am to wear it when I go to Court after the wedding,” she said. “Afterwards I should like it to be sent to the bank. It would not be safe to have such a treasure in one’s house.”

“Certainly not,” I replied; “that is, unless you intend to keep Gopinath.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that, he is certain to wish to return to India. I don’t suppose, either, that I shall often wear the stone—it is too magnificent, and there is something about it which frightens me.”

“I should regard this stone more as representing monetary value than as an ornament to wear,” I said. “It is really almost too big, and as you say, looks too like the eye of a cobra to be a really comfortable ornament.”

“It is that which gives it its value,” said Captain Mainwaring, who now joined us. “I don’t think, after all, Pamela, that we ought to change the setting. A gem like that is a possession—it must be a family heirloom, eh?”

As the soldier spoke he gave an affectionate glance at the pretty girl who was so soon to

without a word, but he stretched out his hand as if to detain her; she turned then and looked him full in the face. As she did so every vestige of colour left hers.

"I came here to-night to give you back your promise and your gift," he said. He thrust a letter into her hand, and a moment later left the room.

Shortly afterwards I also took my leave, and returned to the flat which I occupy in Bloomsbury. I have fitted myself up a laboratory there, and spend a great deal of my time in that sanctum. It was past eleven o'clock when I got home; my servant, Silva by name, a Hungarian, was waiting up for me. I told him to go to bed, and went straight to my laboratory. I was making certain experiments of an interesting nature, and in particular was anxiously developing some photographs which I had just taken by means of the Röntgen rays. The new discovery was now the craze of the whole scientific world, and I, of course, with other men of science, was bitten with it. I had several vacuum tubes by me, and all the necessary apparatus for making the rays. My impression was that the new discovery would make rapid strides, and would be of immense importance to medical science. I had just retired into my dark room to develop some photographs when there came a ring at the front door. It was late for a visitor to call, and I went out in some surprise to ascertain what could be the matter. Silva had not yet gone to bed—he opened the door, ushered someone in, and then came to me.

"Mr. Carroll, sir—he would like to see you for a few moments."

"Carroll," I exclaimed, "and at this hour—where have you shown him?"

"Into the laboratory," answered Silva.

"I will go to him," I replied. "Do not sit up—I can let Mr. Carroll out myself."

I returned to my laboratory. Carroll was standing where the full rays of the electric light fell on his face. He looked cadaverous—his cheeks were hollow, his eyes had a disturbed and glassy expression. When I entered the room I saw that he had taken up some proofs of mine which lay on a table

near. They had been sent to me from the medical paper for which I constantly write. When he heard my step he threw down the sheets and came forward to meet me.

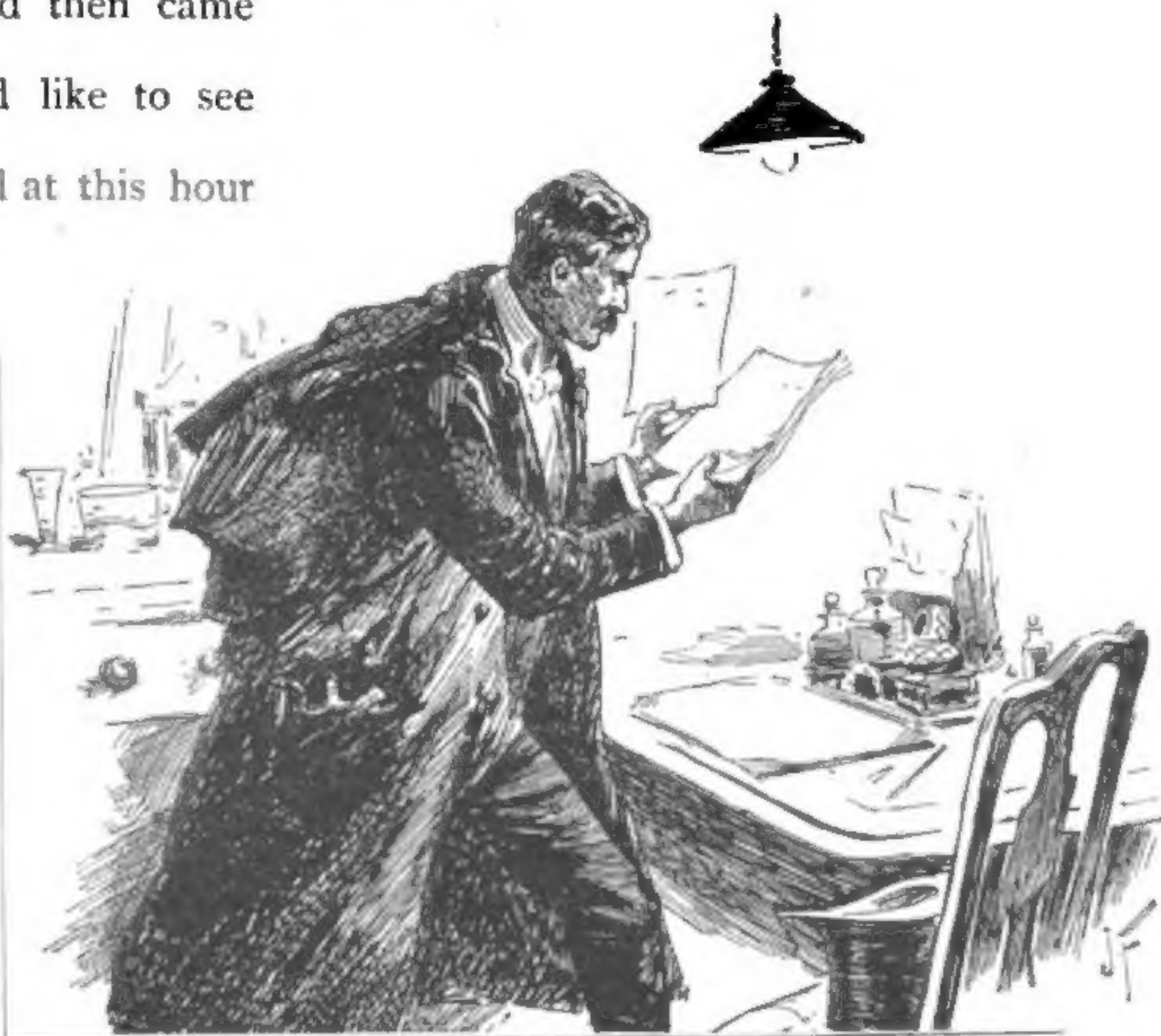
"I do not apologize for calling at so late an hour," he said, "for my business is of great importance. By the way, that article on poison is full of interest—is it for a medical journal?"

"It is for a forthcoming number of the *Lancet*," I replied. Then I added: "But the subject would scarcely interest you."

"It happens to interest me immensely," answered Carroll; "it is about a strange poison."

"It is—one of the most dangerous known. As you have read some of my description, I will tell you how I happened to write the paper. I am much interested just now in the Röntgen rays, and make many experiments with the new light. A few days ago, while experimenting with ferrocyanide of potassium, I accidentally found that I had evolved as a by-product that most dangerous drug, anhydrous hydrocyanic acid. The article, a proof of which you have just looked over, is written with a view to show the danger which I myself or anyone else, forgetful of this fact, might unknowingly run. There is, as I said just now, no more dangerous poison known. It causes death by inhalation, and the process of making, without certain precautions, is fatal."

"Would the victim suffer?" asked Carroll, abruptly.



"HE HAD TAKEN UP SOME PROOFS OF MINE."

"No—death would be instantaneous."

"And you have really made the drug, Gilchrist?"

"Yes, a few days ago—entirely by accident, as my article explains."

"Well, the subject is interesting," said Carroll—he sank into the nearest chair as he spoke.

"There are moments," he continued, gazing at me with bright eyes—"there are moments in the lives of many men when the poison question becomes full of strange fascination."

"I hope such a moment may never come into your life," I said, favouring him with an earnest glance—his eyes avoided mine—he locked his thin hands tightly together.

"Now to turn to my own business," he said—"I do not apologize for this late visit—my state of mind and my circumstances are beyond mere apology. I have come here to-night, Gilchrist, to ask your advice."

"My dear fellow, you are heartily welcome to it," I answered.

"You see before you the most wretched dog in all Christendom."

"Oh, come," I said, "matters cannot be as bad as that."

"You have heard all about Lady Pamela and myself?"

"Yes, Carroll, I know that story. I need not say that I pity you—you are going through a rough time just at present, but believe me——"

"I can scarcely listen to ordinary consolations just now," he replied, breaking in abruptly on my well-meaning speech. "I had better come to facts at once. I do not intend that marriage to take place."

"What do you mean?"

"Pamela Crossthwaite is not to marry Captain Mainwaring."

"You must be mad!" I exclaimed. "How can you possibly prevent the marriage?"

He laughed in a troubled sort of way.

"I have put a cog in the wheel of that confounded Captain's prosperity to-night," he said. "I gave Pamela a letter which will at least insure her having a bad night."

"You did very wrong."

"I do not agree with you—I wish to save her from the greatest misery any woman can know. Marriage is at best an awful thing—to be married to the wrong man is torture."

"What have you come to see me about?" I asked, after a pause.

"Because it is necessary for me to speak to someone, and you are an old friend of the family. You are also a good sort of fellow

all round, and have helped other men out of scrapes before now. Lord Attrill would be sure to listen to any words you were good enough to say to him. Gilchrist, I want you to do me a favour. I want you to go to him to-morrow morning in order to plead my cause once again."

"You must be ill, Carroll," I said. "How can I possibly interfere at the eleventh hour? The wedding is to take place on Thursday. Do you suppose for any plea of mine Lord Attrill would permit his daughter to break her word to Captain Mainwaring?"

"He might if the truth were put straight before him," answered Carroll. "Lady Pamela loves me—she does not love Mainwaring."

"You have no right to say anything of that sort."

"I have every right, for it is true. Did you not notice her face when she saw me to-night?"

I was silent—I had certainly noticed the changing colour, the misery which clouded the beautiful eyes. After a pause I spoke.

"I must say some very plain words to you," I began. "You are not acting in a manly way. It is true that Lady Pamela was at one time attached to you—her people did not approve of you for her, she was very young, and not supposed to know her own mind. She suffered at the time, but has now got over her troubles. A man in all respects worthy of her has come forward, and if you have only half the courage you ought to have, you will leave her alone to marry him happily the day after to-morrow."

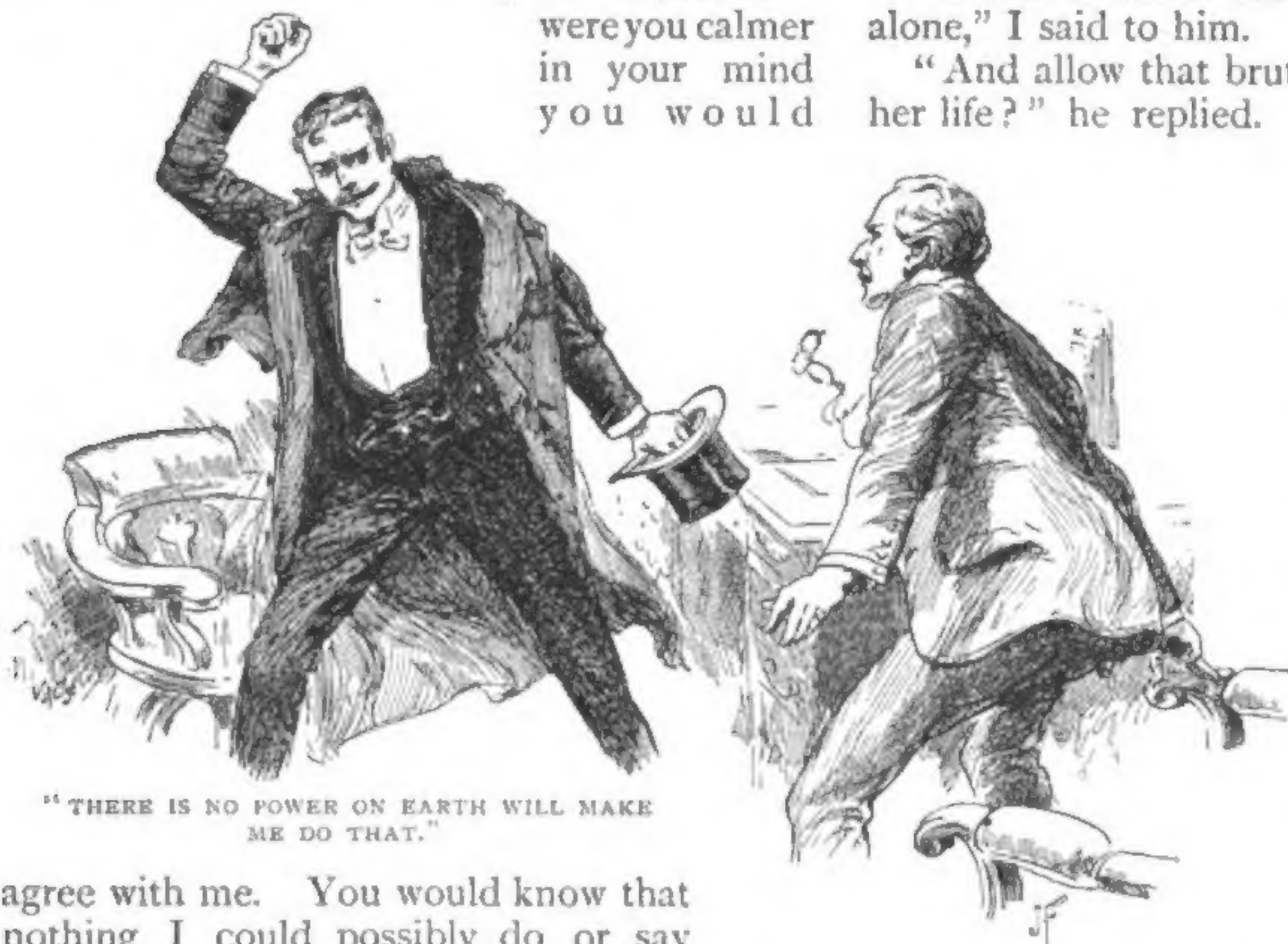
"I am quite impervious to any hard things you may like to say of me," answered Carroll. "My mind is absolutely made up. Either the marriage between Lady Pamela and Captain Mainwaring is broken off, or I commit suicide."

"Oh, folly!" I retorted, starting to my feet. "I am ashamed even to listen to you. You profess to love Lady Pamela, and yet you would cast such a terrible shadow over her life?"

"No, I would draw the line at that," he answered; his lips trembled, and his eyes softened for the first time. "If she marries Mainwaring, she will never know of my horrible fate. I have given her people to understand that I am returning to my regiment. If I cannot effect the object for which I have visited you to-night, I will allow her to continue in that belief. She will think of me, when she thinks of me at all, as living and suffering far out of England. I will take good care that she does not learn

the worst. But now to business: will you help me or will you not?"

"It is impossible for me to help you in the way you have just suggested. It would be useless—were you calmer in your mind you would



"THERE IS NO POWER ON EARTH WILL MAKE ME DO THAT."

agree with me. You would know that nothing I could possibly do or say would alter matters now. If you meant to interfere, why did you leave it to the eleventh hour?"

"Because I have been out of England with my regiment. The news of the engagement reached me in Africa three weeks ago. I managed to get leave of absence, and took the first boat back to England. I arrived in London this afternoon. Well, I will not keep you any longer. I am sorry you cannot see your way to help me. Had you arranged to talk to Lord Attrill, matters might have been made a little easier. As it is, I must take my own course."

"You are fully resolved to see Mainwaring?"

"I am. I have told Pamela in the letter which she received to-night of my intention. Mainwaring shall not marry her in the dark. Before he sleeps to-night he will know from me the whole story of our engagement."

"And your idea is that this news will induce him to break off the match?"

"I think it probable; anyhow, I will put him to the test."

"Suppose he sticks to his engagement?"

"Then I shall not live to hear the marriage bells ring. By the way, Gilchrist, how did you say that drug of yours was to be used?"

"You have nothing to do with that," I answered. "In your present state of mind the less you think of poisons the better."

He rose without a word. He was a tall and slenderly-made man of wiry build; his lips shut in a firm line. I had seldom seen a more determined face.

"I wish I could induce you to leave well alone," I said to him.

"And allow that brute to have his way with her life?" he replied. "There is no power on earth will make me do that."

He shook hands with me and left the house.

He had been gone but a few moments when, approaching the table where the proofs from the *Lancet* lay, I perceived that page eight was missing. On this page a careful description was given of the use to which the deadly acid could be put. I looked

around me in consternation—the page might possibly have dropped on the floor—I could not find it—the next moment a cry of alarm escaped my lips. A small bottle of the drug itself had been standing near the manuscript—it also was gone. In a moment I knew what had occurred. Carroll had seen the word "poison" written in large letters on the label of the bottle, and had evidently slipped it into his pocket before I entered the laboratory.

I am not in the ordinary sense of the word a doctor, although I have studied both medicine and surgery—I know, however, only too well the deadly and awful nature of the drug which the unhappy man had provided himself with. To follow him was my immediate duty. I put on my hat and went out—the hour was now past midnight. The moment I found Carroll I would force him to return me the bottle which contained the anhydrous hydrocyanic acid, but I had not gone many steps before I remembered, to my consternation, that I did not know his address. He had spoken, however, of visiting Captain Mainwaring. Mainwaring was staying at the Savoy. I would go there, inquire for the Captain, and, if necessary, force my way into the room where the two were having their interview.

I hailed the first hansom I came across, and desired the man to drive me to the Savoy

Hotel. When I got there it was close on one o'clock. The night porter alone was up. In reply to my message he said he would go up to Captain Mainwaring's rooms and ascertain if Mr. Carroll was with him. I waited in the hall—the man came back after a few moments to inform me that Carroll must have left, for the lights were all out in the Captain's rooms, and he concluded therefore that he had retired for the night.

I left the hotel—there was nothing more to be done until the morning. I returned home, and entering my laboratory spent many hours thinking over Carroll's unhappy story. As the time flew by my uneasiness grew greater and greater—towards morning I dropped asleep in my chair. In my sleep I was troubled by dreams, in which I saw the awful drug which I myself had manufactured taking deadly effect on more than one hapless victim. When I awoke with a start and bathed in perspiration the winter daylight was struggling into the room.

I went to my bedroom, changed my things, and ordered Silva to get breakfast. While dressing I quickly made up my mind. I would have a cup of coffee and call at an early hour on Captain Mainwaring at the Savoy. He might possibly know Carroll's address. In any case I would be able to judge by his manner what effect the young man's communication had had upon him.

Breakfast was served, and I had just entered my morning-room when a loud peal at the front door startled me. Silva went to open it, and the next moment Carroll, white as death, and with an expression on his face which paralyzed the words I was about to utter, entered the room.

The moment the servant withdrew he came eagerly up to me.

"I cannot realize it," he said; "I do not feel the slightest pain; but all the same, I know I am a doomed man. Captain Mainwaring is dead."

I sprang to my feet.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I state a fact. I saw him last night,

and told him the whole story of my engagement to Pamela Crossthwaite. He was angry at first, then he calmed down—said he would take a night to think over matters, and begged of me to be at the Savoy at eight o'clock this morning. I arrived there to find the whole place in consternation—the Captain was found dead in his bed—a doctor had been summoned, who gave it as his opinion that there was undoubted foul play. I could see by the expression on the faces of the hotel servants that I was suspected. I told the head waiter that I was going to see you, and walked straight out of the hotel. Now, what is to be done?"

"This is terrible," I said; "there must be some mistake."

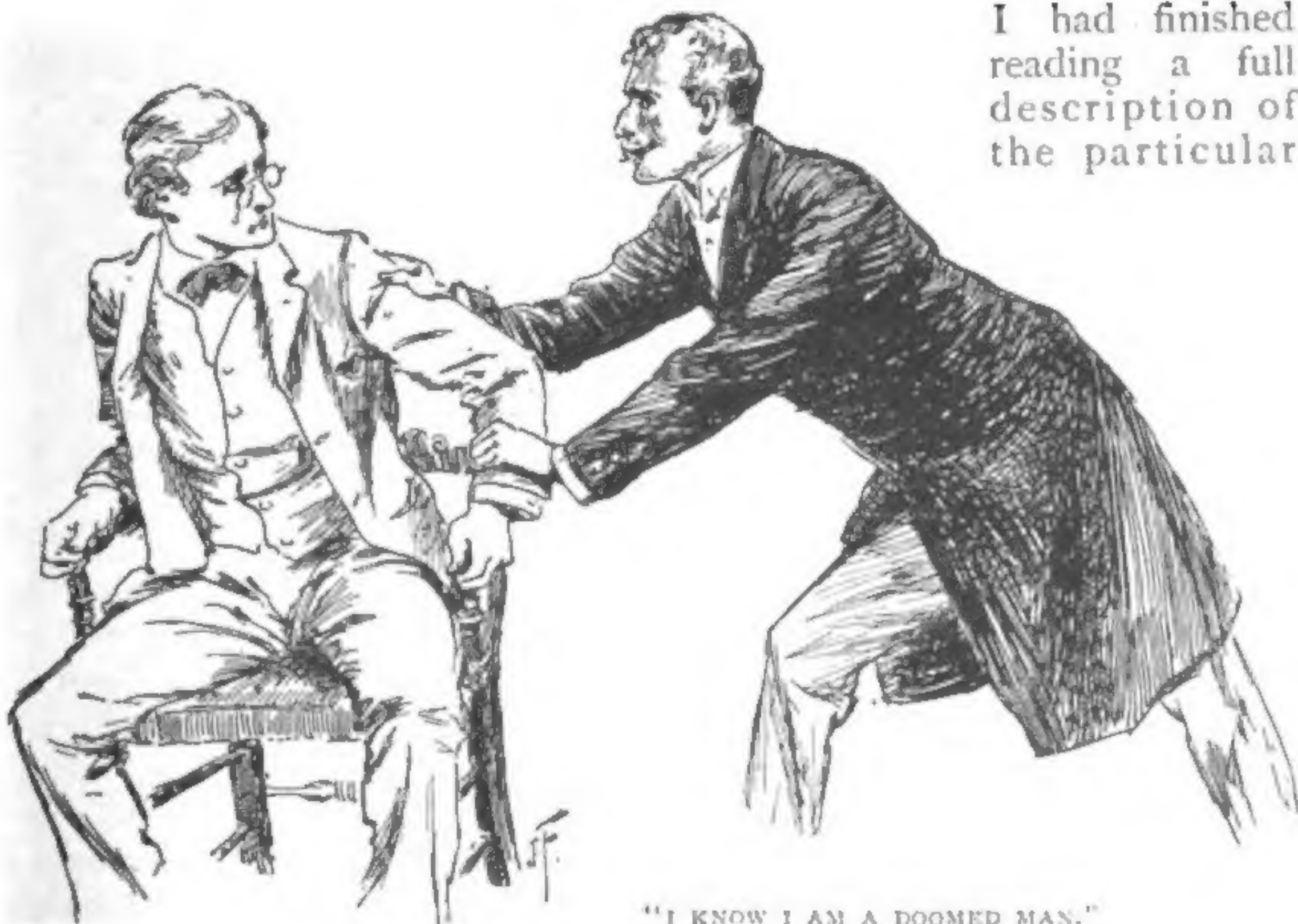
"There is none. Would I invent anything so ghastly? You must see for yourself, Gilchrist, what this means to me. I was the last person with Mainwaring—we parted in anger—the hotel servants will swear as to the length of our interview. I shall be arrested almost immediately—and to confirm matters, to make it impossible for me to escape hanging, there is this, Gilchrist, in my pocket."

As he spoke he drew out the little bottle of anhydrous hydrocyanic acid.

"Give it to me," I said, stretching out my hand for it.

"No, I shall keep it now. I took it for my own purposes. It lay on your table last night. The first thing I saw when I entered the room was the 'poison' label on the bottle. I was tempted, and appropriated it before you appeared. I was searching for means to take my own life if necessary. Just as you

entered the room I had finished reading a full description of the particular



"I KNOW I AM A DOOMED MAN."

action of the poison. I slipped page eight of your proof also into my pocket. Here is the proof now and here is the bottle."

"Well, at least you can give them back to me—you need not voluntarily slip a rope round your neck."

"It is too late," he replied. "When I heard the fatal news at the hotel I staggered and almost fell. Some fiend tempted me to put my hand into my pocket. I pulled out the bottle and stared at it as if I was stupefied. A waiter who stood near must have seen the word 'poison' on the label. No, I shall brazen the thing out now. I have come to you as the only friend I possess. What do you advise me to do?"

"To sit down and if possible tell me what occurred," I replied.

Carroll stared at me fixedly for a moment, then he flung himself into the nearest chair, and clasping his big hands round one of his knees began to speak.

"I will tell you what occurred.

I arrived late at the Savoy Hotel, but Mainwaring had not gone to bed. I saw him and told him my story. He absolutely refused to give Pamela up."

"About this bottle?" I said, as Carroll paused and wiped the moisture from his brow.

He glanced at it with a strange expression.

"I went to the Crown Hotel," he continued, "a small one, not far from the Savoy. When I reached my room I took the bottle out of my pocket. Mainwaring's words had nearly maddened me. I saw he would not relinquish Pamela on any terms. A horrible desire to take away my own life surged into my brain. I read the paper once again in which you give a description of the exact action of the poison. I broke the seal and removed the cork from the bottle. In another moment I should have inhaled the drug, and my miserable life would have been over—but in that instant, terror, as cowardly and complete as my former mad passion, filled me. I dreaded death as much as a moment before I had longed for it. I put the cork back into the bottle and thrust it into my

pocket. Now, that is all—what do you advise me to do?"

I was just about to speak when a ring at the front door interrupted my words. The next instant a couple of police officers, accompanied by Lord Attrill, entered the room. One of the men went straight up to Carroll.

"Is your name Laurence Carroll?" he asked.

"It is," replied the young man.



"A COUPLE OF POLICE OFFICERS ENTERED THE ROOM."

"Then I hold a warrant for your arrest on suspicion of having murdered Captain Mainwaring at the Savoy Hotel last night."

Now that the blow had really come, Carroll was quiet enough.

"I will go with you, of course," he said, "but I wish to say at once that I am perfectly innocent."

"The less you say, the better for your own sake just now, sir," replied the man. "It is my duty to take you, and, of course, I am sorry, but the quieter you come the better."

Carroll held out his hand to me—he did not even glance at Lord Attrill, who, on his part, took not the least notice of him.

A moment later I found myself alone with the old Earl.

"The scoundrel!" he cried, when the door had closed behind Carroll and the police officers. "I wonder you allow such a fellow to visit you Gilchrist—well, this is a nice state of affairs—the only thing left to me in life is the pleasure of seeing that fellow get the fate he deserves."

"He is innocent, Attrill," I said. "Before God, I am speaking the simple truth—

Carroll has no more committed murder than I have."

Lord Attrill favoured me with a queer smile.

"Well," he said, "I suppose you will stick to your opinion, although you must not expect me to share it. By the way, this fearful news has upset my poor child to a terrible degree. She begged of me to ask you to call and see her. Will you come with me now?"

"Of course I will," I replied.

I put on my hat, and Lord Attrill and I left the house. We took a hansom and drove direct to Portland Square.

All preparations for the wedding had been of course abandoned, and the big house presented a curious spectacle. Waiters and upholsterers were quickly taking down the wedding decorations and removing all traces of the coming festival. A door at the further end of the wide hall stood open, and Lord Attrill and I went straight in that direction when we entered the house. The next moment we found ourselves in the room where Lady Pamela's wedding presents were still on view. The table with the glass case stood in the centre of the room; a purple cushion lay inside the case—but the diamond was gone.

"Ah!" said Lord Attrill, noticing the direction of my eyes, "poor Mainwaring had a queer fad about that stone. He brought it here every morning, but insisted on taking charge of it himself at night. By the way, under existing circumstances, it will not be safe to leave it at the hotel. I had better go at once and fetch it."

He had scarcely said the words before a door at the farther end of the room was opened, and the Indian servant, Gopinath, glided in. His noiseless entrance might scarcely have been noticed by either of us, but the moment he saw us he made a queer sort of cry which seemed to come from some unknown depths, and rushing forward flung himself at our feet.

"*'Sānp Kee Ankh'* is stolen!" he gasped. "I have found the empty case."

He held up the morocco case in both hands.

Lord Attrill seized it.

"What do you mean?" he said. "Get up, fellow. What have you discovered?"

"The cobra's eye is gone," repeated the man. "I found the case empty, as you see it, under my master's pillow. I have brought it here. Mainwaring sahib must have been assassinated by the thief who stole the gem."

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Lord Attrill's excitement on hearing these tidings was extreme.

"This, indeed, gives a motive for the murder," he said. "Gilchrist, I must leave you. Gopinath, come with me at once."

The Earl and the Indian servant left the room together. The moment they did so I turned and rang the bell. A footman appeared.

"Have the goodness to tell Lady Pamela that I am here," I said. "Ask her if I can do anything for her."

The man withdrew silently. He came back after a very few moments.

"Lady Pamela wishes to see you at once, sir," he said—"will you follow me?"

He led me upstairs, and the next moment I found myself in a pretty boudoir, the rose-coloured blinds of which were down.

A girl in white glided eagerly forward—she stretched out both her hands, and grasped mine with frantic force.

"Do not begin to pity me," she said. "I feel no sorrow for Captain Mainwaring's fearful end. Oh, I know it is horrible of me, but I must tell you the truth—he loved me, and they say he has been murdered. As far as he is concerned I only feel stunned—you will hate me for it, I know, but all my sufferings are for Laurence Carroll."

"Sit down," I said to her. "This terrible event has upset you. Try to be more calm."

"How can I?" she said, in reply. "They have just told me that Laurence has been arrested on suspicion—they believe, too, in his guilt, I see it in their eyes—they think he murdered Captain Mainwaring. Oh, I cannot speak of my fear. A bottle of poison was found in Laurence's pocket. They tell me you know something about that."

"Unfortunately, I do."

"How did he get it? Had you anything to do with it?"

"I refused to tell your father when he asked me a similar question," I replied, "but you are different; if you will listen to me, I will tell you the simple truth."

I then related in as few words as possible the manner in which the dangerous acid had got into Carroll's possession.

"You think he took it because he meant to commit suicide?"

"That was his intention. Thank God, when the supreme moment came he had not sufficient strength to carry out his own desperate resolve."

"Are you going to attend the inquest?" asked Lady Pamela, after a pause.

"Yes."

"Are you likely to be asked about the poison?"

"I am certain to be questioned about it."

"You will not tell what you know?"

I looked at her in some surprise.

"I must not keep my knowledge back," I said. "Remember, I shall be under oath."

"That is the point to which I am coming," she replied, seeming to gather up all her strength for a supreme effort. "Even though you are under oath, I want you to promise me, to promise me faithfully, that you will keep your knowledge back."

"You want me to commit perjury?" I said. "You cannot know what you are talking about."

"Yes, I do know," she replied—here she flung herself on her knees at my feet—"what

"What do you mean?"

"I cannot help it," she gasped; "I fear the worst. He was desperate—the letter he wrote to me told me that. I ought never to have given him up—I never really loved Captain Mainwaring. Oh, anything might have happened under such terrible, terrible circumstances."

"You must listen to me quietly," I interrupted. "You did not speak to Carroll last night as I did—you did not see him this morning as I did, again. Had you done so, the fears which now haunt you would not have arisen. That he is a desperate and despairing man, I fully admit; but, Lady Pamela, he is not a murderer."

"You comfort me, in spite of myself," she sighed. The look of agony partly left her eyes. She wiped the moisture from her brow.

"I would not tell you this if I did not believe it," I said. "Now I must revert to something else. Do you know that the diamond is missing?"

"What!" she cried, "the Snake's Eye?"

"Yes, it has been stolen. Gopinath has just come to the house with the news. Your father has gone away with him. That fact alone seems to me conclusively to prove Carroll's innocence. The person who stole the diamond was undoubtedly the one who committed the murder. Now, it was not money Carroll needed—the diamond would not, in such a moment of his life, have been of the slightest value to him."

Lady Pamela listened to me with flaming cheeks and bright eyes. The fact that the Snake's Eye was missing gave her the greatest consolation. I had to leave

her soon afterwards, but promised to return when I had any news to convey.

The inquest was held at an early hour the following morning. I was, of course, obliged to be present. The evidence against poor Carroll was overwhelming, and a verdict of wilful murder was returned by the coroner's jury.

Carroll was locked up to await his examination before the magistrate, and the Crosswaite family were all plunged into the



"HE WILL BE HANGED IF YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH."

does perjury matter? He will be hanged if you speak the truth."

"Get up," I said, taking her hand—I led her to a sofa which stood near.

"*Promise* to conceal your knowledge."

"Let me speak to you quietly, Lady Pamela; your fears run away with you. The way to do Carroll a real kindness is to clear him."

"But what if he cannot be cleared?"

deepest gloom. I called late in the evening to see Lady Pamela, but was told that she was seriously ill, that a doctor was in attendance, and that an affection of the brain was considered imminent.

I returned to my own house too restless and miserable to take any interest in those secrets of Nature which generally absorbed my closest attention. I was in my library, trying in vain to divert my thoughts, when Silva came to tell me that the Indian servant had called and wished to speak to me. I desired him to be admitted at once, and the man entered the room.

He came straight up to me and presented me with a letter from Lady Pamela. I opened it. It was a request that I would call to see her at an early hour the following morning.

"I am nearly mad with trouble and illness," she said. "An interview with you would give me the greatest comfort."

While I was reading the letter, Gopinath stood with folded arms a few feet away from me. I glanced up at him, and was immediately struck with the great change in his appearance. When last I had seen him, he had appeared to me as a strikingly handsome specimen of his race—thin and wiry, upright as a dart, with beautiful, supple limbs. Now his face was emaciated, his eyes had the expression of anguish which one sometimes notices in those of a suffering dog, his figure was bowed, and at intervals long, shuddering sighs escaped his lips.

"You are ill, Gopinath," I said, speaking abruptly.

"Sahib, I suffer," he replied. He pressed his hand, as he spoke, to his right side. "I suffer agony," he said again.

"Give me your hand," I said. I took it in mine. The pulse in the thin wrist was quick and wiry; the man's skin also burned; he was evidently very ill, and I thought he must have fallen a victim to some form of Oriental fever.

"When I breathe I suffer torture," he said; he spoke with a gasp. I motioned to him to take a chair, but instead of doing so he seated himself on the floor with his legs doubled up under him. "Can you relieve me?" he asked. "They tell me you understand the healing art."

"You had much better see a proper doctor," I said.

He shut his eyes and began to sway backwards and forwards.

"I don't want an English doctor," he said; "it is the cruel cold of your England that makes me suffer. I want to get back to my own country. I shall die if I stay much longer here."

He rubbed his hand over his right side. As he did so a sudden idea darted through my brain. His unaccountable grief, the complete change in his appearance, made a wild hope leap within me. No suspicion in connection with the murder had yet fallen on Gopinath. Suppose, after all, he knew more about it than anyone else? In my mind there was not the least shadow of doubt that the person who stole the diamond was the murderer. Suppose the temptation to appropriate so valuable a gem had proved too much for Gopinath?

"Stand up," I said to him, suddenly. "You suffer pain there?" I pointed to his side.

"Torture," he replied. I saw that he could scarcely pull himself upright—his sufferings were at least real.

"I am going to find out what is the matter," I said.

"Can you cure me?" he asked, a faint return of hope coming into his eyes.

"I may be able to do so. Stay where you are for a moment; I will be back directly."



"HIS SUFFERINGS WERE AT LEAST REAL."

I left him and went into my laboratory.

The moment had come when I might really test the Röntgen rays. Was it possible that they might indeed be the means of discovering crime, and so save an innocent life? Crookes's vacuum tube was got into the right position—I saw that the rays worked well—then I returned to Gopinath.

"Come with me," I said.

He followed me into my laboratory without a word. I desired him to strip, and then after some difficulty arranged him in such a position that the rays should pass through his body. I turned off the light in the room—my electrical battery worked well, the rays played admirably in the vacuum tube. I removed the cap from the camera, and after an exposure of from seven to ten minutes, felt certain that I had taken a careful photograph.

"That will do," I said to the black man.

I led him back to my library.

"I have taken a photograph of you," I said to him, "which may show me the seat of your malady. When I have developed it, I will come back to you."

I returned to my dark room, and quickly developed the plate. When I had done so, and really saw what the mysterious X rays had produced, I could scarcely restrain a loud and joyful exclamation. The skeleton of the wiry Brahmin was distinctly visible, and just below the region of the ileo-caecal valve, a foreign substance about the size of the Snake's Eye was seen. I had not the least doubt, from its peculiar shape, that I was looking at the gold socket of the cobra's eye, the diamond itself being probably not impervious to the X rays. Men of Gopinath's nationality had swallowed precious stones before now. This was not the first time in the annals of history that the human body had been made a hiding-place for theft.

I returned to the sick man, told him that I had found out what was the matter with him, and might possibly give him relief before long. He was in such a state of agony that he scarcely listened to my words, and evidently suspected nothing.

I then left the house, and returned in a short time with Lord Attrill, and a very clever doctor of the name of Symes. I showed my photograph to both these gentlemen, and their astonishment was beyond all bounds.

"The wretched man is suffering from peritonitis," said the doctor, giving a careful glance at the well-marked obstruction revealed

in the photograph. "Of course, the first thing is to remove that substance, whatever it is—but I doubt if he can stand it. If that cannot be done almost immediately he will not recover."

"The most important matter of all is to wring a confession from him," said Lord Attrill.

"Well, come with me now, both of you," I said.

We went to my library, where Gopinath lay flat on the floor, groaning piteously.

"You are so ill," I said to the Indian, "that I could not possibly cure you without the aid of a good medical man. This is Dr. Symes. The first thing he must do is to remove the diamond which you have swallowed."

His dark eyes, glowing like jewels, were fixed on my face. It did not even occur to him to deny my accusation.

"Is there any hope that I shall recover?" he asked.

"None whatever, unless the diamond is removed. Now tell us by what means you murdered Captain Mainwaring."

"With a drug known only to my people; but I will not reveal that secret. I brought the poison all the way from India, and only waited my chance. On the night that I saw Mainwaring sahib talking to the young English sahib I thought the hour had come. I always meant to recover the stone. The Sānp Kee Ankh was the eye of one of our gods, and his curse was on me unless I brought it back. I had furnished myself with a skeleton key of the sahib's room, and when I thought he was asleep I entered softly and poured the poison on his pillow. I knew well that it would kill him in a moment. I saw him breathe his last, and when he was quite dead I slipped the case from under his pillow and took the eye. I swallowed it as the best means to prevent it being discovered."

The wretched man tried to say something more, but fell back, writhing in pain.

Dr. Symes did all he could for him, but in vain; Gopinath died at an early hour the following morning. After death it was easy to remove the cobra's eye, and the case against Laurence Carroll naturally fell through.

Lady Pamela left England about a month ago, and is said to be slowly but surely recovering her health. Carroll is still in England. Whether these unhappy lovers will ever be united in the bonds of holy matrimony, time alone can prove.

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveller. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

II.—OUGHT HE TO MARRY HER?



MY small laboratory in Bloomsbury has been the source of more than one interesting experiment. I have worked the X rays, and have caught some glimpses of the infinite possibilities of the new discovery, but no subjects interest me so much as those which relate to biology, and of late my whole attention has been turned to the new future which the treatment of disease by animal extract affords.

The subject in its full intensity is naturally more in the line of the ordinary medical man than myself, but if I am not a biologist in the full sense of the word, I am nothing, and it has often seemed to me that the scientific man of leisure has more opportunity for making experiments and working up valuable discoveries, than his brother who is in the thick of the battle-field itself. The following story, which bears fully on the subject of this new discovery, absorbed my keenest attention at the time, and I cannot forbear from giving it here:—

On a certain evening in the month of May, my friend Dr. Everzard and I were seated together in his private study. We had been engaged in an interesting discussion, and I had been telling him of experiments which I had been fortunate enough to complete.

"Yes," he said, with eagerness, "I fully believe that there is a great future before this theory of treating disease by animal extract, and I shall be greatly surprised if it does not prove of marked use in the case of the insane."

"That is the very point I am coming to," I answered. "With all our knowledge we must confess that at the present moment we know little or nothing of the marvellous structure of the human brain. Until we are better acquainted with its functions, you doctors will be in the dark as far as the real treatment of insanity is concerned."

"I am by no means sure that light is not coming," answered Dr. Everzard. "Brain disease is often due, I feel sure, to functional disturbance and consequent mal-nutrition of

certain centres. We see this plainly in cases of epilepsy, hysteria, etc. If we can, therefore, ascertain where the brain is at fault, there is a rational deduction and line of treatment pointed out."

I thought over these words for a moment; meanwhile, Everzard gave a quick glance at his watch.

"How the time has flown," he said, "we have neither of us another moment to waste. Pray, Gilchrist, hurry up to your room and get into your evening dress. If we don't both hasten we shall not be in the ball-room when the strains of the first waltz strike up. I cannot afford to be absent. You know your way to your room, don't you?"

I said I did, and hurried off to dress as fast as I could. This was the night when the great annual ball was held at Fairleigh Manor, and when the county were invited to attend the function.

Fairleigh Manor is one of the most beautiful places in the south-west of England. It possesses something like ninety acres of pleasure grounds, and the house itself is old and full of historical interest. On ordinary occasions, however, the high walls which surround the pleasure grounds, the wrought-iron gates, and the general air of seclusion, cast a certain gloom over the lovely place.

Dr. Everzard is much respected in the neighbourhood, but it is well known that he has a queer strain about him. Fairleigh Manor belongs to him, he is known to be a very wealthy man—he has refused to marry, and has turned his own place into nothing more or less than a large lunatic asylum. There are all sorts of theories to account for this, the favourite one being that there is really concealed insanity in Everzard's own family. To the outward eye, however, the gloom of the place does not affect its owner—he is a bright, keen-looking man of about forty years of age. Not only does he attend to his patients, but he is on the local board of magistrates, and attends church at least once every Sunday. There is nothing of importance which goes on in the district that he does not take part in, his activity

being something wonderful. To look at him one can see that he is all on wires. His patients adore him, and he has the satisfaction of performing many permanent cures. The life at the Manor is all that is luxurious, the terms are reasonable, and the restraint as slight as possible. Moral suasion is brought to bear whenever moral suasion can effect its object; and Everzard, I know for a fact, often spends the short hours in earnest endeavours to lift the veil which separates the sane man from his insane brother.

He is a special friend of mine, and I am fond of running down to the Manor whenever I can spare the time to spend a couple of nights there.

On this occasion I was in time for the annual ball. Once a year the beautiful place is really thrown open—the dangerous patients disappear, no one cares to inquire where or how; but all those patients who are sufficiently well can once more sun themselves in the public gaze. Not only the splendid house itself, but the stately grounds, are got ready for the reception of guests.

On this particular night, having dressed, I ran downstairs. I lifted a curtain, and found myself in the great ball-room. Just within the entrance my eyes lighted on my friend Everzard and a particularly graceful, fair-haired woman of about thirty-five years of age. They were talking earnestly together,

and I noticed that Everzard's eyes lightened, and his face seemed to contract with some displeasure as he conversed. The moment he saw me a look of relief passed over his features, and he came a step or two forward to meet me.

"Gilchrist," he said, "allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Joliffe. Mrs. Joliffe, this is my old friend, Paul Gilchrist."

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Gilchrist," answered Mrs. Joliffe. She raised two sky-blue eyes to my face; a colour of the faintest rose mantled her cheeks for a moment, then left them with a lovely creamy pallor.

We stepped out through an open window, and Mrs. Joliffe leant against a pillar round which a lovely "Gloire de Dijon" climbed. It was just coming into flower, and she pulled one of the half-open buds and began to pick it absently to pieces.

"What are you doing in your world now?" she said.

"In my world?" I answered, startled by her tone, and at the flashing light which came and went in her peculiarly blue eyes.

She laughed—her laughter was as sweet as a silver bell.

"Ah," she said, "did I not see you talking to Dr. Everzard? You know my story, or at least some of it. You know that I am one of the unfortunate victims who live in this outward paradise—in reality, in this gilded prison."

"I am truly sorry for you," I said.

"Pray don't be that," she interrupted, "I am leaving here next week. Thanks to our good doctor's care I no longer belong to the insane members of the public. Now you understand why I asked my question. I do not wish to appear ignorant when I leave Fairleigh Manor. Please tell me what they are doing now in your world."

She laid her small hand confidently on my arm.

"Let us walk up and down," she said, "it is quite sheltered on this terrace. Now, please, tell me."



"THEY WERE TALKING EARNESTLY TOGETHER."

"What about?" I asked.

"Oh, anything—not Parliamentary news, of course, but society gossip, little scandals, the 'bon mots' of polite life. What is the subject which interests most now in the London drawing-room, for instance?"

I began to relate one or two of the topics of the day.

She gazed at me while I was speaking with large, interested, wondering eyes.

"How nice," she said, "how I shall enjoy it all again! Of course no place, *for a lunatic*, could go beyond this, but when one is cured one can really enjoy life to the full. By the way, Mr. Gilchrist, you hold a somewhat unique position in London society, do you not?"

"Not that I know of," I answered, with a laugh.

"Let me see," she continued, holding up one of her pretty little hands, and beginning to count on her fingers; "you work hard, and yet you have so much money that you find it unnecessary to earn your own living."

"There is nothing very uncommon in that," I replied.

"Don't interrupt me. You are a noted traveller—you are partly of foreign extraction—your mother was not an Englishwoman, in consequence you have the foreigner's gift for languages; you know several."

"Nevertheless, in these days, such a fact does not put me out of the common run," I replied.

"Don't interrupt me, please; I have something further to say. You know the secrets of our prison-house, and yet you do not belong to us."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this: you have lifted the curtain which shows the hideous reality of disease, mental or physical, and yet in the ordinary sense of the word, you are not a doctor."

"Heaven forbid," I replied.

"Why do you say that? Why should you not help your fellow creatures?"

"It is my delight to help them when in my power," I said.

"Is that indeed so?" She looked at me with quite a glitter in her eyes. "Perhaps some day," she added, after a pause, "we may meet again, and it may be in your province to render me assistance."

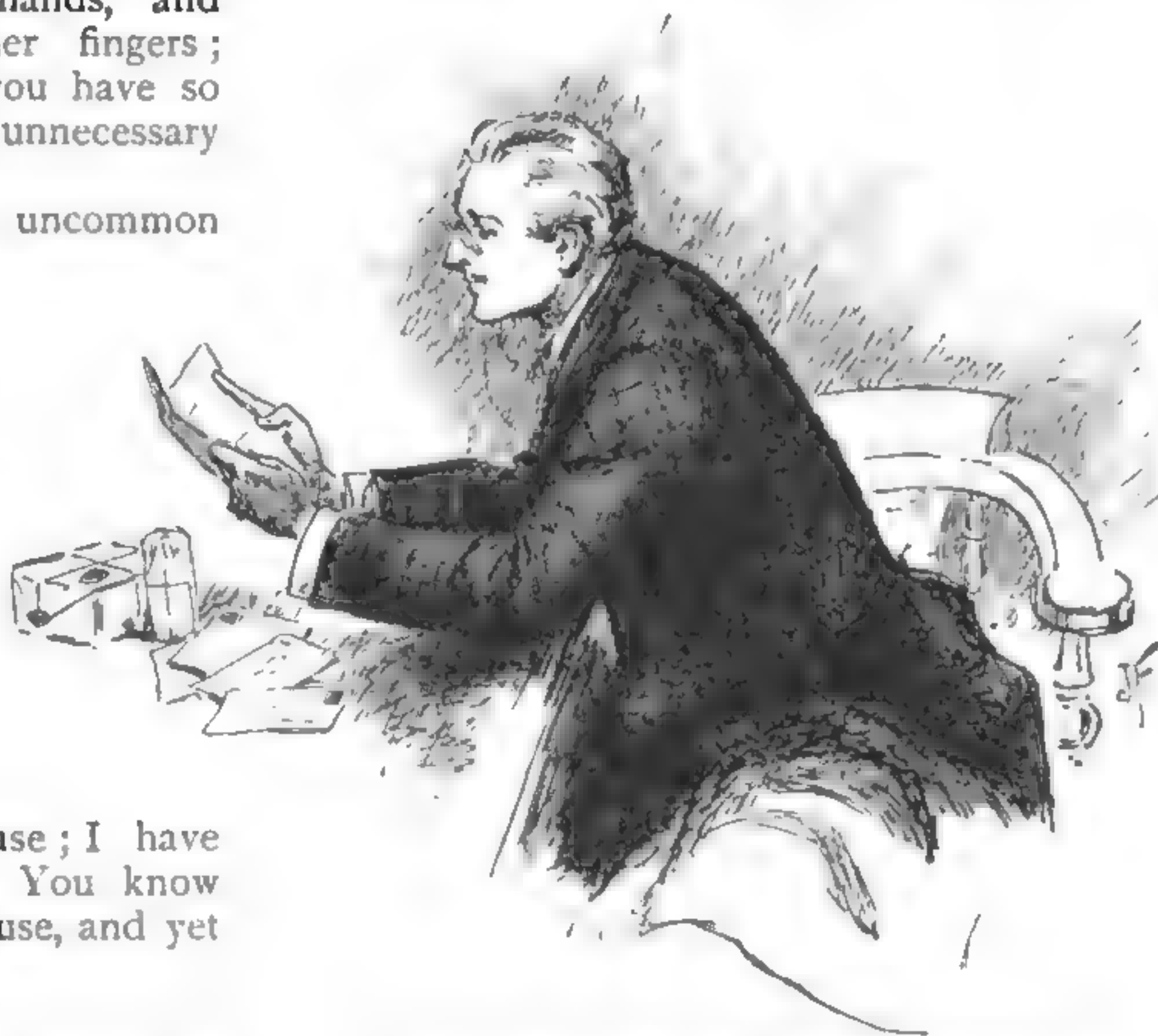
"If it is, be sure that I will do my utmost for you," I answered.

I had scarcely said the words before a neighbouring squire came up to take Mrs. Joliffe in to dance, and I had no opportunity of talking to her again that evening.

Early the next morning I left the Manor, but on my way up to town, the recollection of her somewhat strange face kept flashing again and again before my memory.

When I returned to town I found a letter awaiting me from my friend, Lucian Maxwell. He and I had spent a whole year travelling together in the Himalayas, and there were few men whom I knew better. I opened his letter now with eagerness, its contents were calculated to surprise me.

"When you read this, my dear Gilchrist, you will doubtless be astonished," he wrote. "I am about to enter immediately into the



"ITS CONTENTS WERE CALCULATED TO SURPRISE ME."

holy state of matrimony. I, who vowed against the whole thing for so long, am at last caught in the toils. My only excuse is that Laura is unlike any other girl I ever met. Fairer, braver, and, I believe, more noble. I really flatter myself that these are not altogether lovers' raptures. Gilchrist, you must see her for yourself. I write now to claim the performance of an offer you once made to act in the capacity of my best man should I ever break my vow. We are to be married in exactly three weeks, and as Laura has no settled home, the wedding

will take place from my place in Derbyshire. Pray write at once to say that you will be at my service on the 25th of June."

I threw down the letter, went to my diary, looked up the date, marked it with a red cross, and then wrote to my friend telling him that I would certainly be present at the wedding, and would be only too glad to make the acquaintance of his future bride.

Maxwell was as fine a fellow as I have often met, but he was not without a curious crank in his disposition. He was good-looking, well-off, with a family history above reproach, but he had some curious views on many subjects, and in particular with regard to women. From his earliest days he had been fond of making mental sketches of his future wife. This impossible creation, as I used to consider her, must possess in all things the happy mean, being neither too young nor too old, too clever nor too silly. She must be feminine without being prudish. She must be brave without possessing any of the attributes of the New Woman. In short, as I often said to

Maxwell, his future wife must come straight down from Heaven, for in no other way could he obtain the perfect woman whom he hoped some day might own his name and be the mother of his children. Now, it appeared that he had discovered this pearl of great price, and that her feet really trod the earth.

"No doubt the girl is as commonplace as possible," I said to myself. "Maxwell has fallen in love, and he sees her through false

glasses. Well, I shall soon know for myself." I wrote the usual congratulatory letter, and prepared to go to Combe Ashley the last week in June.

On the afternoon of the 23rd, I started for my friend's place; I arrived in good time, but to my surprise no one met me at the little wayside station, which was distant about two miles from the house. As the afternoon was a particularly fine one I desired my luggage to be sent after me and walked across the fields to Combe Ashley. My way led me through a pine-wood, which was just then in the perfection of its summer foliage. Thankful for the shade, I sat down for a moment under a tree, and taking out my sketch-book, was preparing to make a sketch when I was startled by the sound of a woman's cough. I raised my eyes, and then started quickly to my feet, for the bright and glittering blue orbs of Mrs. Joliffe were eagerly fixed on my face.

"Ah," she said, coming forward and giving a slight theatrical laugh, "I thought it quite likely that you would take this short cut. That is well; I shall be able to have a little conversation with you before we join the rest of the visitors."

"How do you do?" I said, "I am surprised to see you here."

"Are you?" she replied; "well, I can account for my presence very

easily. But before I say another word it is my turn to ask you a question."

"What is that?"

She came close to me, and looked up into my eyes with a peculiar gaze.

"Do you remember where you saw me last?"

"Perfectly well."

"I want you to keep that fact a secret."

"I shall certainly have no object in betray-



"I WAS STARTLED BY THE SOUND OF A WOMAN'S COUGH."

ing it," I answered, speaking abruptly, and with some annoyance, for her manner irritated me, I did not know why.

"That is good. You have promised, remember, to respect that most important secret. I am here as a guest, and not a soul in the house, with the exception of yourself, knows my previous history. I do not choose that anyone shall know. When I heard you were coming here I will confess that I got a considerable start; then it occurred to me that I might manage to meet you before you met any of the other guests, or, in particular, before you had any communication with our charming host, Lucian Maxwell. I have managed this, and you have promised to respect my secret, so all is well. Now, will you sit down and let me sit near you, I have a good deal to say."

I motioned her to avail herself of a mossy bank which sloped away from one of the pine trees. She sat down without a word, and I placed myself at a little distance.

"Now," she began, eagerly, "I must say what I have come to say in as few words as possible. You wonder that I am here—I will tell you. What more natural than that a mother should be in the house with her child, just before that child's wedding?"

"What can you mean?" I asked, surprise and fear on my face.

"Exactly what I say. I have got a daughter, a beautiful daughter—her name is Laura, she is to marry Lucian Maxwell the day after to-morrow."

"Your daughter is to marry Lucian Maxwell," I repeated.

"Yes, pray don't look so stunned; when you see her you will quite forgive your friend's indiscretion."

"It is not that," I replied. I turned my face away. Like a flash a memory rose before my mental vision. If there was a subject on which Maxwell, in my opinion, was a little over-particular, it was on the dreaded topic of heredity. Over and over again had he been fond of assuring me that far rather would he allow his ancient house to die out of existence than bring serious disease into his family. When I last saw Mrs. Joliffe she had been confined in a lunatic asylum. She had met me now in order to wring a promise from me that I would not acquaint Lucian Maxwell with this fact. I had given her the promise without knowing what it involved. Ought I to keep it?

My eyes met her's.

"You think I have trapped you?" she

said. "Well, I meant to do so. Now, remember, I hold you to your word; you are not to betray what you know about me. Lucian Maxwell is a special friend of yours. He told me last night with what pleasure he looked forward to your visit. He spoke of the old friendship which existed between you, and said that his crowning bliss would not be there unless you accompanied him to the altar. Those were strong words, and they meant a great deal. Lucian, in my opinion, is one of the best of men; he is the very husband of all others I desire for Laura. She is to marry him on the 25th—you quite understand?"

I did not speak.

"If he knew all that you know about me that wedding would never take place."

"Mrs. Joliffe," I said, suddenly, "is it right to keep Maxwell in the dark?"

She laughed. Then the colour flooded her thin, excited face.

"From my point of view it is perfectly right," she said. "Now I mean to take you into my confidence. You met me a month ago at a ball at Dr. Everzard's house—beyond that one fact you know nothing whatever about me."

"That is perfectly true," I replied. "Everzard, of course, mentioned to me that you were one of his patients."

"Yes—I wish he had not done so—that, alas, signifies a great deal. Now listen to me attentively. When I heard last evening that you were expected here, not only as a guest, but as the special, indeed the chief, friend of the bridegroom, I experienced a sensation of agony, which you, with your cool, well-balanced life, can little understand. The object of many long years, the hope so soon to be realized, the reward for self-denial the most intense, of horrors all cheerfully borne because one result was to be the consequence, seemed about to be shattered by a single blow. Then I remembered your face, which appeared to me to be strong as well as kind. I also recalled a remark made by you to me, that whenever it was in your power it was your pleasure to help your fellow-creatures. Mr. Gilchrist, it is now in your power to render me assistance. The opportunity which you wished for has arrived. You see before you a very miserable and a most anxious woman. I claim your sympathy and I demand your help."

"Pray be assured that there is nothing I would not do for you," I replied, "but the promise you have just wrung from me, Mrs. Joliffe, means injustice to my friend. If

ever there was a man fastidious, over-sensitive on the subject of family history, Maxwell is that person. Is it right to him, is it right to your daughter, to allow them to marry without his knowing the girl's true family history?"

"I repeat, that from my point of view it is perfectly right. Laura is to marry Lucian Maxwell the day after to-morrow. By a mere accident you have got hold of my secret. I insist on your keeping your promise. I expect you to respect it as a man of honour. I have one child. She represents my all of hope, of love—she is my only treasure. She knows nothing whatever of the unhappy doom which hangs over me. She is beautiful, lovable, worthy of the best that life can offer her. I say once for all, that I will not have her happiness tampered with. She is much attached to Lucian, who thinks her perfect—he shall marry her knowing nothing whatever of my unhappy history. I demand your silence."

"This places me in a most unhappy dilemma," I said.

"I am sorry for you; but what is your dilemma to mine? Now, I want to take you further into my confidence. You met me at Fairleigh Manor?"

"Yes, and Everzard gave me to understand that at times you suffer from want of control over your emotions. Perhaps, after all," I added, eagerly, "your mania may be of a very slight character."

"If so, would my liberty have been taken from me? No, do not flatter yourself that it is anything of the sort. At a moment like the present there is no use in mincing matters. You shall know the simple truth. The form my mania takes is the following: I am pursued by the most horrible, ghastly fear that I am being poisoned. Each kindly word, each gentle glance, each sympathizing expression, seems to me at such times like the cunning of my deadliest foe. My mania rises to hatred, and unless something is done to arrest its progress, I should think very little of trying myself to take the life of the person whom I imagine is conspiring against me. But I cannot speak of it further. Only an insane person can know what I endure. Even at the present moment, even as I speak to you, I feel the sure approach of the terrible cloud which shuts away the sunshine of my life. I am convinced, however, that I shall be able to control myself until Thursday morning, when I return immediately to Fairleigh Manor."

"And your daughter is quite unaware of all this?" I said.

"Yes. I have managed well, she knows nothing. My husband died soon after her birth, and when my darling was five years old she was taken from me and sent to school. We used to meet occasionally in the holidays, and we always corresponded with regularity. When with her I have hitherto had power to restrain myself. She suspects nothing. Your terrible theory of heredity cannot be correct, for I am convinced my only child will escape my awful fate. I have done all that I could by placing her in the healthiest environments to insure that. But if she is the victim of a cruel blow I cannot answer for the consequence. She is fragile, physically delicate—were you to tell what you know of me to Mr. Maxwell you would, in all probability, render my daughter insane for life."

I rose to my feet.

"You place me in a terrible position," I replied, "but there is no help for it, I will respect your scruples. I only pray Heaven that I am not committing a sin in doing so."

"Be assured that you are acting nobly, Mr. Gilchrist."

Mrs. Joliffe also stood up, she came forward and took one of my hands in hers.

"Heaven bless you," she said. "You have lifted a weight from my mind. My Laura will now be happily married on the 25th, on which day I return to the Manor. Until then not a soul will know, except yourself, of my secret."

"How have you managed to keep Miss Joliffe in ignorance all this time?" I asked.

Mrs. Joliffe laughed.

"Ah, I have been clever," she said. "My girl is under the impression that I have spent all these long years travelling abroad. I have one or two friends on the Continent who have posted my letters to her. You will see for yourself how unnatural, how more than unnatural, it would have been had I not been present at her wedding. Afterwards I shall see little or nothing of her; but my mind will be at ease, she at least will be insured a happy life."

As she said these last words she looked down the pretty vista through the wood. Some people were coming up a narrow path.

"Lucian and some of his friends!" she exclaimed. "Remember, Mr. Gilchrist, I trust you and—and thank you."

She gave me a glance full of gratitude as well as warning, and then, with a light laugh, ran down the path to meet her friends.

"I have been the very first to meet Mr.



"HERE I AM, OLD FELLOW!"

Gilchrist," she said, going straight up to Maxwell's side.

"Gilchrist!" exclaimed Maxwell. "Has he come?"

"Here I am, old fellow!" I answered, coming forward.

"But I did not expect you until a later train. Did you walk from the station?"

"Yes, and my luggage is following me."

The colour flooded his thin face—he linked his hand through my arm, and without waiting to apologize to the friends who had accompanied him into the wood, walked away rapidly with me by his side.

"I cannot say how acceptable your presence is," he said, "I have much to tell you, but first of all I want to introduce you to Laura. We will come straight away to her now."

"You look well," I said, by way of reply.

"I never felt better in my life," he answered. "I often told you, did I not, Gilchrist, that my bride could not exist out of Paradise? But there, I have found her at last. Of the earth earthy, thank Providence, but so ethereal, so unworldly, that I think a breath would waft her into Heaven. Come, I see you are smiling, but I assure you these are not mere lovers' raptures. You shall see Laura yourself."

As he spoke, he strode forward with eager steps. The next moment we found ourselves

in a long, low, cool conservatory, protected from the sun by heavy blinds, which shut out the greater part of the heat of the June day. A very slender young girl was standing under an open window. She was twirling a rose in her fingers. When she saw Maxwell the rose tumbled to the floor, and she advanced slowly to meet him.

"Here I am, Laura," he cried, "and whom do you think I have brought with me? No less a person than my best man,

and," he added, giving me an affectionate glance, "my greatest friend, Paul Gilchrist."

"I have heard of you, of course, and I am glad to meet you," she answered—she raised shy blue eyes to my face. She was, I saw at a glance, her mother in miniature, but her mother with a sort of halo cast over her. The same blue eyes were there with their intense—almost china—colour, but in the girl's case they were shaded and softened by thick long lashes of a perfect black. The delicate arched brows, too, were slightly darker. The hair was bright with the brightness of youth, being of a red-gold, crisp, radiant, full of little tendrils and half-attempts at curls—it softened her white forehead and massed itself in graceful confusion round her pretty head. Her complexion was as pink and white as a bit of Dresden china, but extremely delicate, the colour coming and going in her cheeks at the least emotion. Under her wonderful brilliant eyes, too, there were somewhat dark shadows, which seemed to throw up and intensify their expression, adding to the etherealness and fragility of the face. Angelic was the best word by which to describe this very fair girl, and when I gazed at her I did not wonder at Maxwell's infatuation.

She began to speak to me in a low, sweet voice, and I had not been ten minutes in her society before I discovered something else—I caught a glimpse of what was in the heart

of the mother—the passion, the despair which would even commit a crime if necessary to protect so treasured and beautiful a creature from the rough storms of the world.

"The boat is waiting, Laura; are you inclined for our promised row?" said her lover.

She glanced from Maxwell to me.

"If Mr. Gilchrist will come with us," she said.

The compliment was so pretty that I could not but accept. We strolled down together to the lake, and spent an hour or more floating about on its glassy surface.

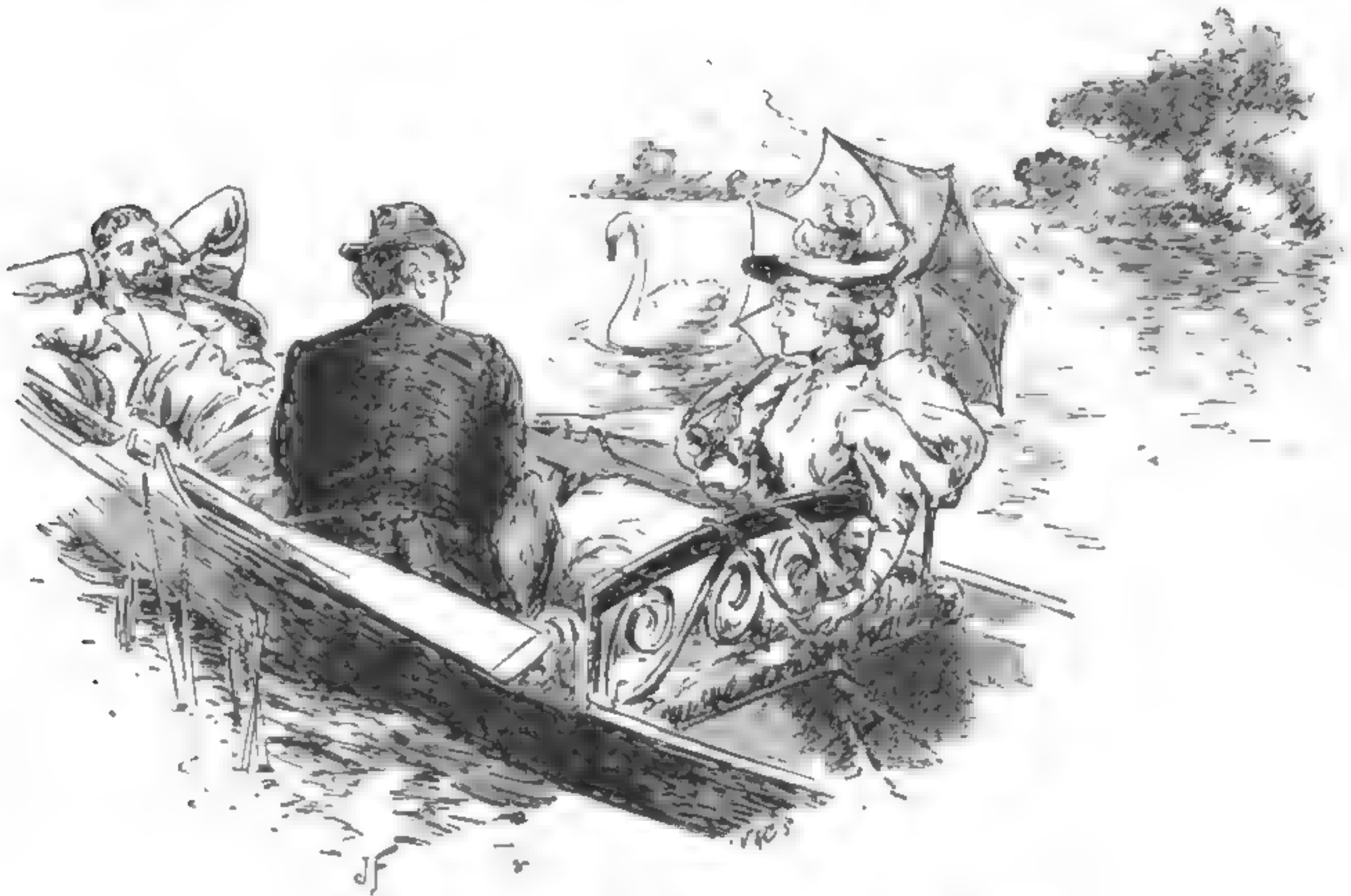
There was to be a ball that night, and Laura was full of the pleasures of the coming dance. Maxwell lay back in the bow of the

brilliant one. Many guests from neighbouring houses had arrived, and the grounds were lighted with Chinese lanterns and many other forms of decoration. Soon after ten o'clock I was standing on the south terrace, when I was startled by a light hand being laid on my arm. I looked round and saw the pretty young bride-elect standing at my side. She was all in white, and looked more ethereal and lovely than ever.

"Can I speak to you?" she asked.

Her voice was very low, and almost unnatural in its tone. Even by the artificial light I could see that she was pale, her lips were trembling.

"Certainly," I replied. "Where shall we go?"



"LAURA WAS FULL OF THE PLEASURES OF THE COMING DANCE."

boat contented to watch her as she talked. She had a somewhat slow utterance, each word coming out with a sort of deliberate pause, which gave a curious effect to her slightest sentence. She addressed most of her remarks to me, avoiding, I thought, in a somewhat peculiar way, her lover's glances. Now and then her brows were knit as if in momentary pain; now and then she drooped her sweet lips; and once I was certain that I intercepted a startled light of perplexity and almost terror in her eyes.

I said to myself, however, that I was prejudiced, that the knowledge of the mother's history made me read more than I ought in the daughter's face.

The dance that evening was a particularly

"We need not go anywhere," she answered.

"Let us walk up and down here."

"But you are cold—you are trembling."

"I do not tremble from cold," she replied.

"Mr. Gilchrist, I must confide in someone—it is all too horrible. You are Lucian's best friend, are you not?"

"One of his best friends," I answered.

"Why do you ask?"

"How am I to tell you the truth?" she replied. "You know I am to marry him the day after to-morrow?"

"Of course."

"I will not break off the engagement, for I am no coward. Besides, if my suspicions are true, I shall wish to be able to revenge myself."

"What do you mean by your suspicions?" I asked, "suspicions against Lucian, the best fellow in the world?"

"Ah," she answered with a laugh, so strange that it curdled me. "You don't know him as well as I do. Lucian is not what he seems. Bend down, for I must not speak aloud. I must on no account inform my poor mother of the awful truth."

"What is it, Miss Joliffe? Speak out, you startle me."

"You will be more startled when you know all. Lucian's love for me has changed—he is trying to poison me."

"What nonsense," I answered. "You must be mad to talk in that way."

The next moment I was sorry that I had used the word. She started away from me, and put up both her hands to her face with a puzzled and terrified gesture.

"Mad," she said, "I mad? What do you mean? It is he, poor fellow, who has lost

said. "There is no use in telling you that your imagination is running away with you, for in your present state of mind you would not believe me. I will speak to Maxwell."

"But you will not tell him that I suspect him? That would make him more cunning than ever."

"No, no, I will say nothing to implicate you; you look dreadfully tired, will you not go to bed?"

"I am terribly exhausted," she answered; "but don't think that I am inventing this, I saw it all too plainly. He carries the poison in his pocket, and only waits for the moment to give it to me. Oh, yes, I shall marry him, and if he persists in his fiendish resolve I know how I can have my revenge."

She laughed again, her bright blue eyes completely altered in expression, they glittered horribly. The laughter had not died away on her lips before Maxwell joined us.

"My darling," he said, putting his hand on Laura's shoulder, "I have been looking for you, you have had no supper—come with me at once, I insist on your having a glass of champagne."

She gave me a glance full of meaning.

"I would rather Mr. Gilchrist took me to supper," she said.

"Well, humour her then, Gilchrist," said Maxwell, raising his brows in momentary surprise. "Laura, I want you to go to bed after you have had some supper."

"Very well, Lucian," she answered, in her peculiarly sweet, low voice.

He gave her an earnest glance which she would not meet. She laid her hand on my arm, and I took her to the supper-room.

"Now," she said, "get me something quickly, I am so hungry. Some chicken and aspic jelly, please, and plenty of champagne."

I supplied her wants, and she ate and drank feverishly. The colour returned to her



"'MAD!' SHE SAID. 'WHAT DO YOU MEAN?'"

his senses. Of course, he cannot know what he is doing. Were he in his ordinary frame of mind he would not act as he has acted more than once during the last couple of days. Only half an hour ago, Mr. Gilchrist, I saw him put a powder into the champagne which he wished me to drink. Oh, it is too terrible; what is to become of me?"

I thought for a moment, and then took my cue.

"You are excited and over-wrought," I

cheeks from the action of the stimulant, and after a time she stood up.

"I am better," she said, "the awful fear is not so haunting."

"When did you feel it first?" I asked.

"On the day my mother and I arrived here, but only very slightly. All to-day, however, the dread has become worse and worse until now it is an assurance. The sight of the powder convinces me. Oh poor, poor, poor mother, she shall never know. I will marry Lucian and hide my misery. Once I loved him well. Oh, why has his love for me turned to hate?"

I saw that she would give way to tears unless I hurried her out of the supper-room.

"Go to bed at once," I said, "I will get to the bottom of this mystery for you. You have confided in me, and I promise to be your friend."

"How kind you are," she said.

She held out her hand, which I grasped. A moment later she had left me.

I hurried off to the ball-room, where I met Mrs. Joliffe.

"Are you engaged for the next dance?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, looking at her programme, "but I don't want to dance. I shall throw my partner over. This place is over-heated; let us go out of doors."

I accompanied her.

"Mrs. Joliffe," I said, the moment we got outside, "you must be prepared for a very painful piece of information."

"That you do not intend to keep your word?" she said.

"It has nothing to do with that. You are a brave woman, and I am sure you will take what I am about to tell you bravely."

Her face turned pale; she pressed one hand against her heart.

"I am accustomed to shocks," she said. "I know what you have come to tell me. Lucian has discovered my secret."

"He knows nothing, all your suspicions are wide of the mark; what I have to tell you is far more terrible."

"Good heavens! speak!" she cried.

"Your daughter——"

"Laura? What of her? Is she ill?"

"In one sense she is very ill. Mrs. Joliffe, she inherits your malady. To-night she gave way to an aggressive form of the madness which at intervals wrecks your life."

"Impossible!" said the miserable woman. She stepped back a few paces and looked up at me with glittering eyes. I gave her a

faithful version of the incident which had just taken place. When I had done speaking she covered her face with her hands.

"Has all my suffering and my self-denial been in vain, then?" she cried. "All the years of loneliness, of horror, have not been sufficient to avert the curse. Oh, my God! why should it fall on her—on her, my innocent angel? Was not one victim enough? What is to become of me?"

"Try to calm yourself and listen to me," I said. "Mrs. Joliffe, I do not think this marriage ought to go on."

"Mr. Gilchrist, it must go on. I think of no one but Laura, and you are bound in honour not to betray me. I know, none better, the workings of the insidious and terrible malady. Have I not gone through it all? Laura feels badly to-night, but to-morrow in all probability she will be her own happy self again. The attacks at first are always slight. Laura will be quite well to-morrow, that is, unless she gets a shock. If she gets a shock now she will be a maniac for life. Mr. Gilchrist, I hold you to your promise."

I was silent.

"You are bound in honour, I hold you to your promise," repeated the unhappy woman.

"What can be the matter?" said Maxwell's voice at that moment. "Why, Gilchrist, you look quite pale; Mrs. Joliffe, I have come to claim you, this is our dance, is it not?"

She put her hand on his arm, made some light and laughing remark, and turned away.

I went upstairs to my own room.

It is needless to say that, during that night, no sleep visited my eyes. My position was sufficiently embarrassing to test the nerves of a strong man. I had obtained, through an accident, the possession of a ghastly secret, which first concerned Mrs. Joliffe and then her daughter. Both mother and daughter were victims. The girl was about to marry my greatest friend. I had given my word of honour not to betray the secret.

For long hours I paced up and down my room. What was I to do? Without being a doctor myself I found myself in the position of the family physician. It is an understood thing that a doctor does not betray his patients' secrets. On that point I entertained strong views. Here was a case which illustrated the theory. Without being a doctor I was in the position of one—I felt bound to be faithful to Mrs. Joliffe. Unless Maxwell found out Laura's terrible malady during the following day I could do nothing to enlighten him.

I went downstairs to breakfast, feeling ill at ease; afterwards I strolled away by myself. My one hope, and it was a miserable one, was that Laura would betray herself that day, and that Maxwell would be warned in time before he was united to a mad wife. To my distress, however, her mother's words with regard to the young girl turned out to be correct.

When she came to breakfast she looked calm and happy, her eyes met mine with serene unconsciousness. I managed to have a chat with her, and found to my added perplexity that she had forgotten every word she had spoken to me on the previous evening. She was devoted to her lover, and went about the grounds hanging on his arm.

Mrs. Joliffe gave me one or two triumphant glances.

I could not join the rest of the happy party. I went away to the wood, and finding a secluded spot sat down to think out the situation. I must keep Mrs. Joliffe's secret, but at the same time I must take some means to rescue Maxwell from the appalling fate which hung over his head. Suddenly, as I thought, a memory returned to me. I seemed to hear my friend, Dr. Everzard, speaking.

"Brain disease," he said, "is often due to functional disturbance and consequent malnutrition of certain centres. If we can, therefore, ascertain where the brain is at fault, a rational line of treatment is pointed out."

I sprang to my feet.

"I have it," I cried aloud, excitedly.

Had there been time I would have gone to consult Dr. Everzard, but there was none. The wedding was to take place at two o'clock on the following day. I could not possibly reach Fairleigh Manor and return within the allotted time to Combe Ashley. But I might go to London and be back before the wedding. With Dr. Everzard's

remark in my mind, I thought carefully over the experiments which I had lately made with regard to animal extracts as a means of cure. If Everzard's idea were correct, there

was a certain portion of Laura Joliffe's brain which was not sufficiently nourished. The new line of treatment pointed out a definite cure for this. If I could supply the unhappy girl with those portions of brain which were faulty in her own, I

might gradually overcome the terrible malady which threatened her. In short, now was the time for me to test the experiments which I had so lavishly made in my little laboratory in Bloomsbury.

There was not a moment to lose, I hurried to the house.

Maxwell was smoking a cigar on the terrace in front of the house.

"Maxwell," I said, "will you order a trap immediately? I must catch the next train. I shall be back here by twelve to-night, if that is not too late."

"Not a bit," replied Maxwell; "I will sit up for you."

He hurried off to give directions, and in a very short time I found myself driving to the railway station.

I caught my train, and reached St. Pancras in good time. I drove straight home, entered my laboratory, secured a certain box of carefully prepared medicine, and took the next train back to Derbyshire. After twelve that night I was once more in my friend's house. Maxwell came to meet me.

"You look fagged," he said; "come and have some supper, it is waiting for you."

I went into the dining-room, made a hearty meal, and then asked Maxwell if the other guests had retired to bed.

"All except Mrs. Joliffe. For some reason she seems to be in a strangely nervous condition. She asked when you would



"FOR LONG HOURS I FACED UP AND DOWN MY ROOM."

return, and said she would like to speak to you."

"She is the very person I want to see," I answered. "Let me go to her at once."

"I suppose I must not know what the mystery is?"

"I am afraid I cannot tell it you," I answered, looking at him earnestly.

For answer he fixed his eyes on my face.

"I had a bad ten minutes to-day," he said. "Laura——"

"What of her?" I asked.

"Nay, I will not tell you, she is all right again now. You will find her mother in the library; do not let her keep you up long."

I went to Mrs. Joliffe with a sinking heart.

She started up eagerly when she saw me.

"What do you mean to do?" she asked, coming forward.

"This," I said. I took the box which I had brought from town out of my pocket.

"What does that box mean?" she asked.

"Sit down and listen to me quietly," I said.

"I have been making experiments, important experiments, with regard to a new cure. I need not waste time now in repeating to you exactly what I have done. Your part is to obey my directions implicitly."

"If I do not?" she asked.

"Then I shall consider myself absolved from my promise, and will tell Maxwell the entire truth."

"I will do anything you wish," she said.

She was trembling exceedingly. At this moment she was obliged to lean her hand against the nearest table to keep herself upright.

"The box which I have brought with me from town," I continued, "contains capsules. These capsules are made of gelatine, and each of them contains a certain dose. The medicine is of a new and important kind. In my opinion, and in that of Dr. Everzard, it acts in a direct manner upon the higher nervous centres. There is a strong possibility, Mrs. Joliffe—remember, I cannot speak with certainty—but there is a very strong possibility that within this little box lies the cure of your daughter's malady."

"God grant it," she said; her great eyes glistened through sudden tears.

"Your daughter must take three of these capsules daily," I continued. "You must get her to promise this. Give her one when she wakes in the morning, give her another before she leaves here with her husband. Wring a promise from her that she will never omit to take three daily."

"I will do so," she answered. "God

bless you, Mr. Gilchrist. Have you anything more to say?"

"Yes; Miss Joliffe must also furnish you with her address. There are enough capsules in that box to last her exactly a month. If they do anything for her, she will in all probability be obliged to continue the cure for months, perhaps years. I must be placed in a position to be able to supply her with more capsules—the whole thing is an experiment, and it may fail, but it is the very best I can do."

"There is no fear of any other evil resulting from the use of this strange medicine?" asked the mother.

"None whatever. If the capsules do no good, they will at least do no harm. I have taken many of them myself. Remember I have hopes, strong hopes, but no certainty. This, however, is the only thing that I can do."

The tears again sprang to Mrs. Joliffe's eyes.

"You are a good man," she said; "you shall be obeyed in every particular."

She left the room.

The next day Laura and Maxwell were married. The wedding ceremony took place without a hitch, and no bride ever looked more lovely.

I was standing in the hall when the bride and bridegroom went away. Maxwell had forgotten something, and had to hurry back to one of the sitting-rooms. For a moment the bride and I found ourselves alone. She came quickly to my side.

"I remember now all that I said to you the other night," she whispered. "Oh! Mr. Gilchrist, the awful fear is over me again—the terrible, maddening fear. From this out I shall be alone with him; I know he means to poison me—but if he does, remember that I—I have taken means to have my revenge."

She laughed as she spoke, that light, inconsequent, terrible laughter of the insane. Her lovely face also underwent a vivid change. For one flashing moment the angel went out of it, giving place to the fiend.

"Take your medicine three times a day without fail," I whispered back, "and try to believe that this unpleasant sensation will quickly pass."

"I have promised my mother to take those queer little pills," she replied.

"Repeat your promise to me; I am certain you are a woman of your word."

"I am, I never broke it yet. Here comes Lucian."

Her face altered, the fear seemed to die

out of it, the angel look returned. She sprang into the carriage, laughter on her lips, the light of happiness in her blue eyes.

What I suffered during the next few weeks it is difficult to describe. No news reached me with regard to Maxwell and his bride. Mrs. Joliffe, according to her determination,

"Read that portion," she said, pointing to the third page. I did so.

"I am glad to be able to tell you," wrote Maxwell, "that Laura, who was nervous and depressed, and was at times, I must add, very strange during the first fortnight of our honeymoon, has now quite recovered her normal spirits. She is really in excellent health, has a good appetite, and is putting on



"SHE SPRANG INTO THE CARRIAGE."

returned to Fairleigh Manor. My sleep was broken at night, my waking hours were haunted by the dread of a terrible catastrophe. Had I done right, had I done wrong? This question haunted me day and night. Would the capsules effect a cure, or would Maxwell find out when too late that I could have warned him against his awful fate and yet did not do so?

At last, on a certain fine morning, one month after the wedding, I could stand the mental strain no longer, and hurried off to Fairleigh Manor.

As soon as I got there I had an interview with Mrs. Joliffe. She came eagerly to meet me, her face was bright, her eyes full of happiness. She placed a letter in my hands. I saw at a glance that the writing was Maxwell's.

flesh. I doubt, when we return to England, if you will know her for the fragile girl who left her native land a short time ago. There is only one odd thing about her; she insists on dosing herself with some extraordinary little capsules three times daily. She is looking over me as I write, and begs me to say that the supply is nearly out, and she wants some more. She thinks they have a wonderful effect upon her, soothing her nerves in an inexplicable manner."

"I have brought a fresh box of medicine with me," I said. "Please send it to Mrs. Maxwell by the next post."

"Mr. Gilchrist," said Mrs. Joliffe, "I intend to try your medicine on myself. If it has effected a cure on my child, why not on me?"

"Why not, truly?" I answered.

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveller. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

III.—LADY TREGENNA.



FEW years ago a total eclipse of the sun was expected to be visible in Ceylon and Southern India. Having never seen the great world of light under these interesting conditions, I arranged to join a party of solar spectroscopists, who were about to start for India. We arrived at our destination in good time, and had the satisfaction of witnessing a total eclipse of nearly six minutes' duration. The phenomenon of the corona, or ring of light, was especially striking, as also were the irregular, red-coloured protuberances round the direct body of the moon.

We made our observations in the hill country, and immediately afterwards started for the coast. The man who took the lead in all our investigations bore the name of Sir John Tregenna. He was without doubt the most enthusiastic of the party. He was tall, dark, and wiry in appearance, a noted astronomer, and the envy of his fellow-travellers, owing to the fact that he possessed one of the finest telescopes in his part of the country. But, keen specialist that he was, outside his own science he seemed to take little or no interest in anything. His history, as far as I could make it out, was commonplace. He was a man of good family, being, indeed, a baronet of long descent. He owned a large property on the sea coast in Cornwall bearing the name of Tregenna Manor. Sir John had been married for several years, but had no children. This fact might possibly account for the gloom which sat at longer or shorter intervals on his fine face, for it was an open secret that the splendid property of Tregenna Manor was strictly entailed, and would go to a distant branch of the family if Sir John died without issue.

On a certain intensely hot night, as he and I were standing together on the veranda just outside one of the big hotels at Madras, he wiped the moisture from his brow, turned round, saw that we were alone, and, crossing his arms, looked full at me.

"You are a bit of a doctor, are you not, Gilchrist?" he said.

"I have studied medicine and surgery," I answered.

"So I have just been informed. Well, the fact is—I am anxious about my wife."

"Lady Tregenna?—I hope she is well," I answered.

"I hope so, too," he replied, with a grim smile; "but"—he paused, then brought out the following words with a burst which revealed irrepressible agitation—"when I left England there was a hope that she might present me with an heir to the property. We have been married for over ten years. It was imperative that I should accompany this expedition, or I should not have left her at such a critical time. I expected news before now. It was arranged that my doctor was to cable to me here"—he broke off abruptly.

"The silence makes me uneasy," he said, after a pause. "I am glad that I am soon returning home."

He had scarcely said the words before a servant appeared, bearing two cablegrams on a salver. One was addressed to Sir John Tregenna, the other to myself. I noticed that he changed colour as he took his from the salver. Out of consideration for him I left the veranda and entered the heated room where we had just dined. I opened my own cablegram. It was somewhat long, containing a good deal of valuable information in cipher. It was from a doctor friend in town with whom I largely corresponded, and whose discoveries as regarded medicine coincided very closely with some I had made myself. The final news in the cablegram startled and distressed me:—

"Your fellow-traveller, Sir John Tregenna, is disappointed of his hope of an heir. Lady Tregenna gave birth to a boy this morning, who only lived one hour."

I made an ejaculation under my breath. Sir John's eager face, the look in his eyes when he spoke of an heir to his property, flashed painfully now before my mental vision. The blow he was about to receive was a cruel one.

I had just thrust the cablegram into my pocket when a grip of almost iron intensity on my arm caused me to turn abruptly. Sir John had entered the room, his hair was standing up wildly over his head, his eyes looked as if they would burst their sockets. Doubtless his own communication had acquainted him with the disaster. I was about to make use of some ordinary words

of commiseration when I was startled by the following sentences from the Baronet's lips.

"Gilchrist," he gasped, "I can scarcely contain myself, the relief is so immense. I am the father of a fine boy. The property is saved."



He dragged me out on to the veranda, and stood there mopping himself and breathing hard.

"This is a relief," he muttered, at intervals.

I did not dare to tell him the news I had just received. His excitement was so great that to dash it to the ground now might almost kill him.

"You do not realize what this means to me," he said, presently, slipping his hand through my arm and pacing up and down. "If I have an enemy in the world, it is the man who was to have succeeded me at the Manor. His name is Dayrell Tregenna. How that wretch has hankered and longed for my death; but, ha! ha! the little fellow will put matters right now. Dayrell won't dare show his nose within twenty miles of the Manor from this day out. He, and his cursed brood with him, can go to the Antipodes for all I care. The child makes all right. So Lady Tregenna is a mother at last. Well, I am a happy man to-night."

He would scarcely allow me to speak. Like most very reserved people, when he gave voice to his emotions he said far more than he intended. It was late when we both retired to rest.

"I shall take passage home to-morrow," were his last words to me; "I cannot rest until I see the kid. To think that I have a lad of my own after these long years of waiting, and that Dayrell is ousted. The thought

of Dayrell gives the highest flavour to my joy. Wish me luck, Gilchrist."

"I certainly do," I answered.

"And prosperity to the boy and a long life, eh?"

"Yes," I replied, again. But the thought of the news which lay in my own breast pocket caused the words to stick in my throat.

"You look stunned, man," said Sir John. "It is plain to be seen that you are not married, or you would not express yourself so lamely."

"I am neither married, nor have I lands to leave to my descendants," I replied; "but I heartily wish you luck, Sir John."

"When you come to England you must visit me at the Manor and see the child for yourself," were his last words. "Now, don't forget; I know your address in town, and will write to you. To tell you the truth, Gilchrist, you are the only man of our party in whom I feel a particle of interest. You shall come to the Manor and be introduced to the boy."

There was not a word about Lady Tregenna. I went wondering to my bedroom.

The next day Sir John sailed for England, and soon afterwards, one by one, the little band of scientific men who had gathered together to witness the eclipse departed on their several ways.

It so happened that I did not leave India for several months, and during that time was concerned to learn that my special friend, Dr. Collett, the man who had sent me the cipher, had died suddenly. His death had taken place on the very day on which the cipher was forwarded to me by cablegram. We had been old chums for years, and had been associated in more than one investigation of interest. I mourned his loss considerably, and when I did return to England the following summer, thought with sadness of the empty place which he could no longer fill, and of the active, kindly, and busy brain now for ever at rest.

Amongst the pile of letters which waited for me in my flat in Bloomsbury, I saw one in the somewhat eccentric handwriting of Sir John Tregenna. I opened it.

"Poor fellow," I reflected; "he must have discovered his loss by this time. God help him! I never saw anyone in such a state of undue excitement as he was in during that last evening we spent together at Madras."

"Dear Gilchrist," the letter ran—"I am given to understand that you will be back in the Metropolis some time in June. I hope as soon as ever you do arrive, and have read the contents of this, you will pack up your portmanteau and come straight down to Tregenna Manor. I want to show you the boy. He is as fine a lad as the heart of father could desire. Dayrell is still in the country, and sometimes visits at the Manor, but with my fine young heir to look at, I no longer mind him. In short, I breathe freely.

"Yours, JOHN TREGENNA."

After reading this letter I felt a curious desire to glance once again at the cablegram which Collett had sent me, and which, amongst other items of intelligence, had informed me that Lady Tregenna had given birth to a boy, who had died after an hour of life. I had been careful not to destroy this cablegram. I took it now from the box where it lay, and read it over carefully once more. There was no doubt whatever of the meaning of the words. Had Collett been alive, I would certainly have gone to his house in Harley Street to talk the matter over with him; but as it was now impossible to get a solution from that quarter, I could only wait for the mystery to unravel itself. After thinking a moment I decided to accept Sir John's invitation, and wrote an acceptance that very day. Shortly afterwards I packed my belongings and started for Cornwall.

Sir John himself met me at the station. All his taciturnity and gloom had left him—he was now a talkative and particularly cheerful man.

"Here you are," he cried, stretching out his great hand and wringing mine.

"And how is the boy?" I asked.

"Splendid—grand little chap. Has not had an hour's illness since his birth."

"And Lady Tregenna?"

"As fit as paint—what should ail her? You will see her for yourself in a moment or two. Now then, we will just pull up here—you catch the first glimpse of the house from here. It is the kind of place that a man would like to hand down to his son, eh? Did you speak, Gilchrist?"

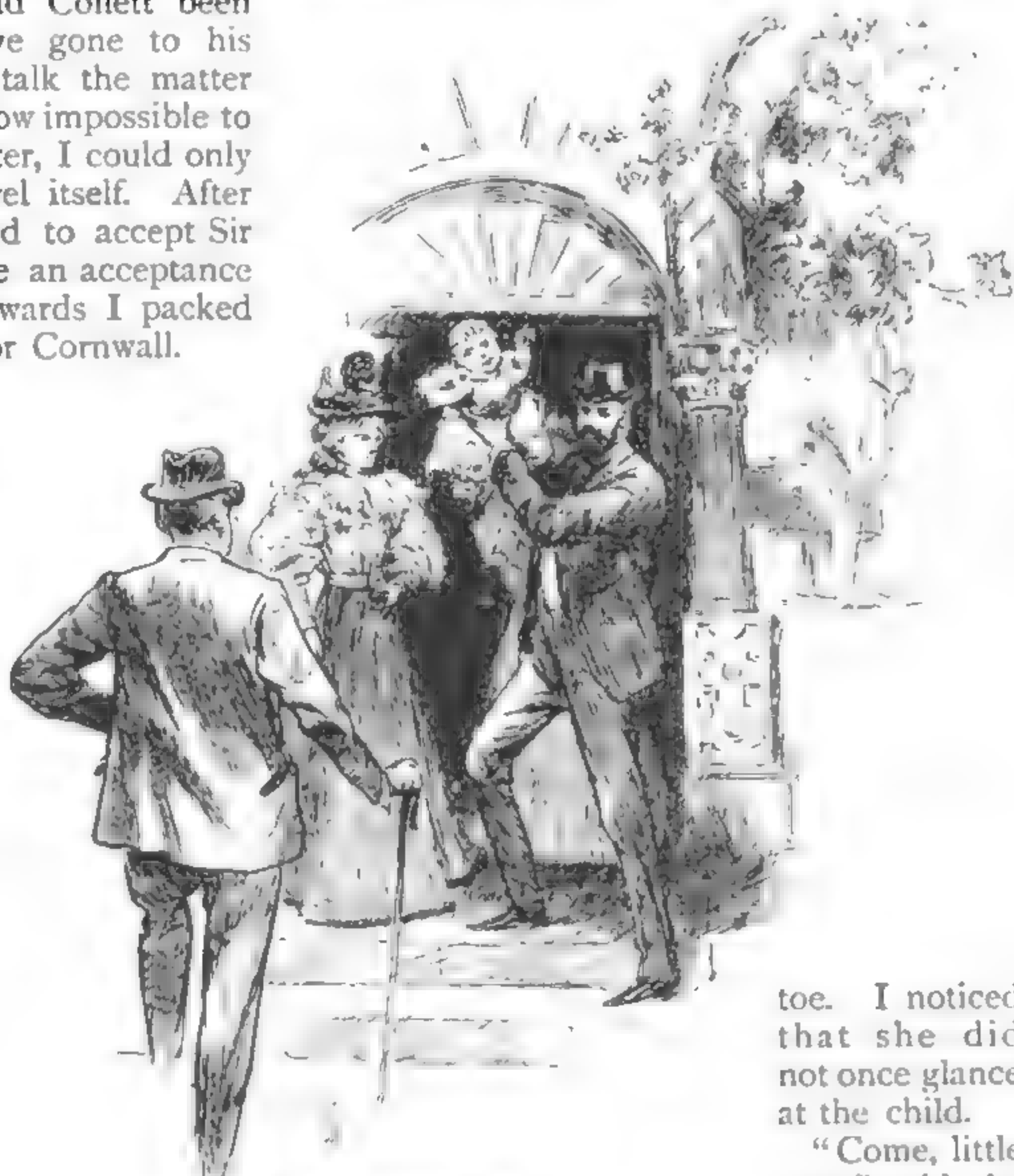
"I did not," I replied. "I see that you have got a very beautiful place, Sir John."

"It has been in the family for generations. Now, come, I will introduce you to the wife and kid in a moment. Bless the boy, he is a fine chap, that he is."

The Baronet whipped up his horses, and a moment or two later we drew up in front of the fine old mansion. Lady Tregenna was standing on the steps—a nurse, dressed from head to foot in white, stood a little behind her, holding a baby in her arms.

"Well, Kate, here we are," called out her husband; "bring the boy down, won't you? This is Gilchrist. Let me introduce you: Lady Tregenna—Mr. Gilchrist. Now, then, wife, bring the boy along. Eh, Gilchrist, what do you think of him, eh?"

While her husband spoke, I noticed that Lady Tregenna slightly blushed. Her complexion was pale, and the blush became her—her eyes grew very bright. She fixed them neither on me nor on the child, but with great intentness on her husband. She seemed to look him all over from top to



"A GOOD SPECIMEN, EH?"

toe. I noticed that she did not once glance at the child.

"Come, little man," said the father; "come

to your dad. Here he is, Gilchrist, not more than six months old—a good specimen, eh?"

"A very fine boy," I answered, glancing at him hastily.

When I said this Lady Tregenna moved a few paces away. Having done so, she turned slowly.

"Perhaps, John," she said, "Mr. Gilchrist is not so much interested in children as we are; that is natural, is it not? Shall I show you the gardens, Mr. Gilchrist, or would you rather go straight into the house before tea?"

"I will accompany you," I replied. "But you are mistaken," I added, "in supposing that I am not interested in this boy. I happened to be in the same hotel at Madras with your husband when he received the cablegram announcing his birth."

"Aye, that was a red-letter night for me," said the Baronet. He glanced affectionately at his wife as he spoke. The moment he did so her whole face altered: it became suddenly very beautiful; she had deep, very dark violet eyes, and they lit up now as if a torch had illuminated them from within, her lips parted in a slow, happy smile. She raised one of her slender hands to push back the hair from her forehead. I noticed then a curious expression about her face which denoted not only beauty but strength. I saw at a glance that she had in many ways more character than her husband, but she was also a woman who looked as if on occasions she might do something desperate. I felt much interested in her. She again approached her husband's side and put out her hand to touch one of the boy's.

For the first time I surveyed the infant critically. He was a well-grown boy, with somewhat large features, but I could not detect the slightest likeness to either parent. The mother was very fair, but the father had a swarthy skin, with dark eyes, aquiline features, and black hair. The baby neither possessed the beauty of the mother nor the distinction of the father. He was an ordinary-looking child, hundreds like him to be found all over the length and breadth of England.

"You are doubtless thinking," said Lady Tregenna, who seemed to be reading my thoughts, "that the boy is not like either his father or me?"

"I cannot see a likeness," I replied.

"Bless him," said the Baronet, "he is only six months old; you can never tell how children will turn out at that tender age. Now, for my part, I have often thought that he had a look of you, madam"—he nodded, smiling, at his wife as he spoke—"about the lips for instance. He has an uncommonly pretty mouth, bless the little lad."

"He is not really like me, John," she answered, "nor is he like you."

"Well, well," said Sir John, impatiently, "he is a fine boy, and quite after my own heart. But, here, I must really take up no more of Gilchrist's time drivelling over the infant. Nurse, take him, will you? See you give him plenty of air; it is a splendid day, and the more he is out in the sunshine the better."

The nurse, a grave, middle-aged woman, with a dark face and thin, compressed lips, came slowly forward, took the boy in her arms, and vanished with him round a corner of the house.

"We are going to have tea on the lawn," said Lady Tregenna, turning to me. "May I show you the way?"

"All right, wife, you look after him," said Tregenna. "I must go to the stables, but will join you presently."

Lady Tregenna conducted me under a thick arch of roses on to a small lawn, where she seated herself by a little tea-table. She motioned me to a seat near her.

"It is strange," she said, after a long pause, "that you should have been with my husband when he received the message that he was the father of a boy."

"There is something else stranger," I continued, impelled, I can scarcely tell by what, to force my information upon her. "I also received a cablegram the same night from my very old friend, Dr. Collett."

"Collett?" she said. "Dr. Collett of London?"

"Yes, of Harley Street. Did you know him?"

"He happened to attend me when my boy was born."

She did not change colour in any way, but I noticed that she toyed with her teaspoon, and dropped three lumps of sugar into the cup of tea which she was about to drink.

"My cablegram was a curious one," I continued; "it was in cipher, of course. It gave me false information with regard to you. Collett told me that your baby died shortly after its birth."

"My baby died—little John died?" said the mother, half rising from her seat, and then sitting down again. She stared full at me. There was no added flush on her cheeks, nor did her large, violet eyes look more than slightly startled.

"What a strange mistake to make," she said, with a light laugh.

"It was."

"Absolutely without foundation," she continued. "But, then, Dr. Collett died on the

day of my baby's birth. He may not have quite known what he was telegraphing to you about."

"I had scarcely read his words," I continued, "before your husband appeared, in a great state of excitement, to inform me that all was well and that you were the mother of a fine boy. Undoubtedly, the boy is a fine little chap. I congratulate you heartily."



"MY CABLEGRAM WAS A CURIOUS ONE."

At that moment Sir John's voice was heard in the distance. Lady Tregenna stood up eagerly. She had taken my news almost too calmly, but now there was unmistakable agitation in her voice, look, and manner.

"Not a word to him," she said, in a whisper. "I would not let him know for the world, he would think it unlucky. You will promise?"

"As I did not tell your husband at the time, I should have no possible reason for repeating the news now," I said. "His affection for the child is quite touching."

"He has the best of reasons for loving him," she answered. She left me, walking slowly across the grass.

That evening Tregenna took me into his study, and we spent a short time examining the valuable photographs he had taken in India of the sun's eclipse. Just before we parted for the night he stood up, looked me full in the face, and spoke.

"So you think the boy a fine little chap, eh?" he said.

"Undoubtedly," I replied, with a smile.

"And Lady Tregenna—she seems pleased to be the mother of the little fellow, eh?—that strikes you, eh?"

"You are wrapped up in him," I said, evasively, for I had noticed from the first that Lady Tregenna scarcely ever mentioned the child, and as far as I could tell appeared to take no special interest in him.

Tregenna's face became crimson.

"I see you observe what I have noticed myself," he exclaimed. "The fact is, there is no accounting for women. I thought she would have been wild about the lad; but, as a matter of fact, never did a woman take a child more calmly. Not

that she neglects him—far from that. She sees that he is well looked after, and has him brought to her once or twice daily; but she never pets him—it is a fact, Gilchrist, that I have never seen her once kiss him of her own accord. Bless me, Gilchrist, I don't understand women. It is not even as if Lady Tregenna were a cold, phlegmatic sort of woman; she is all passion, fire, enthusiasm; but where that child is concerned——" he put up his handkerchief to wipe the drops from his forehead as he spoke; his eyes were full of a queer apprehension.

"People have different ways of showing their affection," I replied.

He took no notice of my speech.

"I sometimes think I bore her by the delight which the fact of possessing that child gives me," he continued; "but, there, I am keeping you up, and you must be desperately tired."

He conducted me to my room, bade me good-night, and left me. I went to the window and flung it wide open. There was no moon, but innumerable stars studded the dark blue of the heavens. I extinguished the lights in the chamber, put my head out of the window, and looked around me. A

fresh breeze blew upon my face, and my sleepiness vanished instantly. I felt a sudden longing to steal downstairs and go out for a long ramble. No sooner did the notion come to me than I acted upon it. The house was already shut-up, but I managed to make my way to a side door, which I unbarred and let myself out.

I wandered down the broad central avenue, intending to branch off in the direction of the sea. I was walking on the grass, and not making the slightest noise, when voices startled me. They seemed to be quite close. I stepped back into a deep shadow. The first words I heard were in Lady Tregenna's high-bred tones.

"I cannot go on with this much longer, Dayrell," she cried. "I cannot possibly give you what you require, for I have not got it. You have drained all my resources. Here, if you will have it, take this ring, it is of great value. If he misses it from my finger I can but tell him another lie."

I saw her give something to a man who stood near, then she turned abruptly and walked back to the house, stumbling and half falling as she walked. As soon as she had left him, the man took a pipe from his pocket and a box of matches. He calmly lit the pipe, and then by the light of another match examined the ring which she had just given him. I could see the diamonds flash for a moment in the light caused by the match, then there was complete darkness. He slipped the ring into his breast-pocket and turned to leave the grounds.

I waited quietly until he had gone some distance, and then made up my mind to follow him. He reached a stile which he mounted and which led direct into the high road. Still keeping my

distance, I did likewise. He walked in the direction of the village, which was within a stone's throw of the sea. Presently, in the extreme quiet of the night, he stopped still, as if he were listening. The belated moon arose at that moment, and turning abruptly, the man saw me following him. He stopped and waited for me to come up.

"You are out late," he said, as I passed.

I made a brief rejoinder, as, although I wanted to get a glimpse of him, I had no desire to enter into conversation. He seemed to guess my intention, for he stepped immediately into the middle of the path.

"By Jove!" he cried, "I know who you are. Your name is Gilchrist—you are a special chum of the governor's; you came to the Manor to-day."

I glanced at him: his features were dark and aquiline—in that particular not unlike Sir John Tregenna's, but they were much bloated, as if by constant dissipation. I could imagine that the fellow drank like a fish. His clothes were seedy and vulgar in style—his lips thin and cruel, his eyes too closely set together.

"Good old boy, Sir John," he said, after a pause; "if you don't wish to make the

most confounded mischief, you will keep this interview dark as far as your host is concerned."

I was silent. The man continued to fix me with his evil eyes.

"I speak for Lady Tregenna's sake," he said again, after a very significant pause. "She will find herself in a nice scrape if anything happens to make me turn up rough. I don't think I need add any more. Good-night to you."

He vanished down a side-path, and I slowly returned to the Manor. Nothing happened of any importance during the remainder of



"I COULD SEE THE DIAMONDS FLASH."

my visit, nor did I see Dayrell Tregenna again. I returned to London after a week's visit, and being much occupied, had little time to devote to the mysterious subject of Lady Tregenna and the heir. A year passed away, when one day I received a letter from her. It was worded as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Gilchrist, I am most anxious to see you. Sir John is in Scotland at present, but I have several friends staying in the house, and if you can make it possible to come to the Manor for a couple of nights, I can promise that you will not have a lonely time. Come if you possibly can.

"Yours sincerely, KATE TREGENNA."

In reply to this letter I sent off a telegram.

"Expect me to-morrow," I wired.

The next day at an early hour I started for Cornwall, and arrived at the Manor in the evening.

Lady Tregenna was in the garden, a very small child was toddling by her side; he was clinging on to one of her fingers, and looking up now and then into her face. The moment she saw me she placed him sitting on the grass and came forward quickly.

"It is good of you to come," she said. As she spoke she made an effort to smile. I could scarcely refrain from uttering an exclamation, so shocked was I at the change in her appearance. There were heavy shadows under her eyes, the eyes were now much too big for the face, the face was worn to emaciation. When I touched the hand which she offered me it burned as though its owner was consumed by inward fever.

"It is good of you to come," she repeated; "if my husband were here he would thank you."

"I am pleased to be of the slightest service to you," I replied. "Is that the little fellow? How much he has grown!"

"He is a very strong boy," she answered—she turned her head somewhat wearily in the direction of the lad, and then looked away again.

The child came toddling towards her,

stretching out both his arms. She did not offer to lift him up, but again extended one of her fingers, which he clasped.

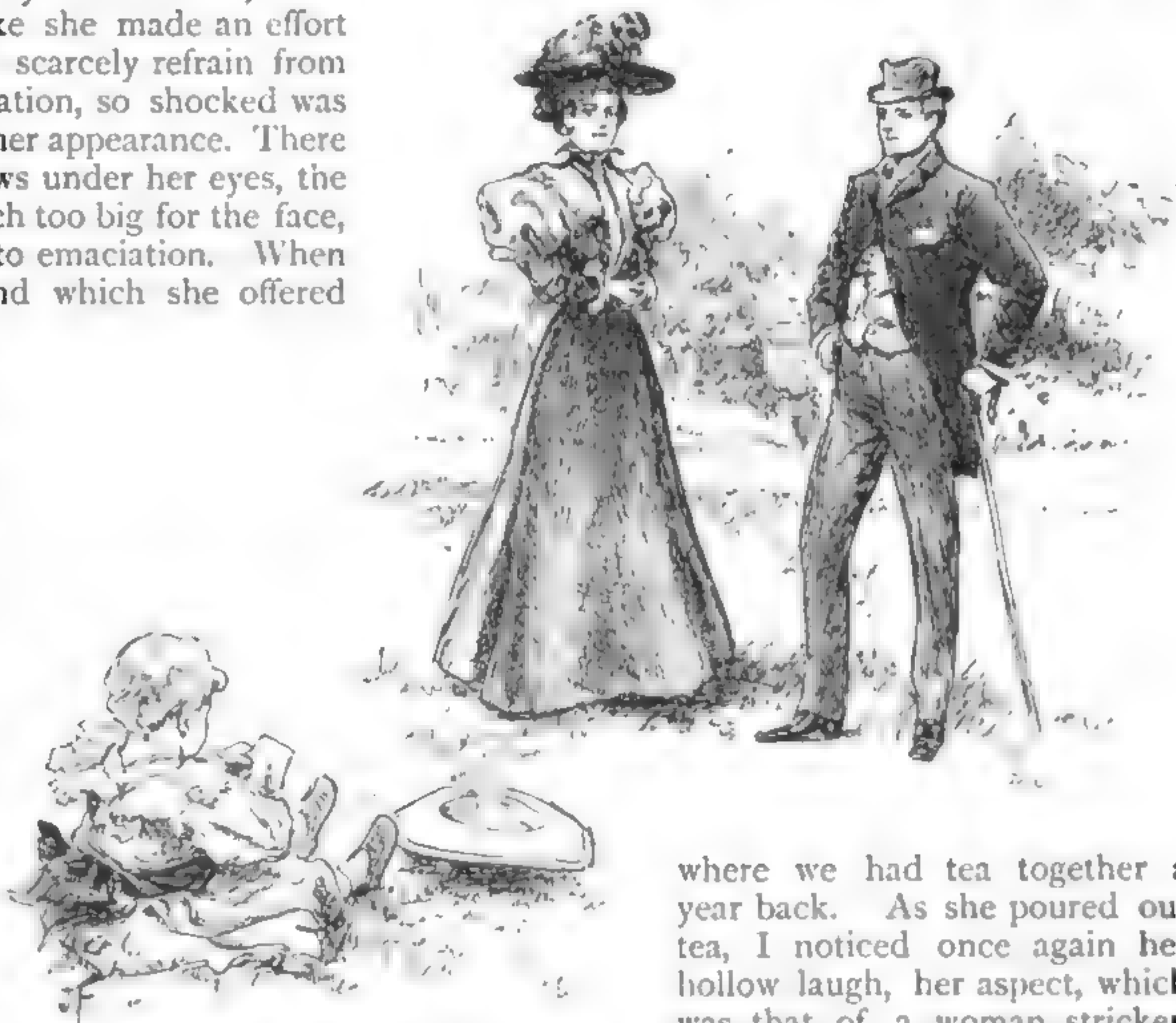
At this moment the same nurse whom I had seen a year ago came into view. Her face also had undergone a remarkable change for the worse. It was always a hard face, dark, with compressed lips, but now it was much lined and looked too old for her evident years—she glanced uneasily first at her mistress, then at me, and finally at the boy. When she looked at the boy I saw a peculiar expression pass like a flash over her features. She bent down, caught the child in her arms, kissed him with a passion which I had never seen the mother evince, and carried him away.

"He really is a very fine little chap," I said. "His father must be proud of him."

"Sir John is wrapped up in him, Mr. Gilchrist," replied Lady Tregenna; "but, come, I have plenty to say to you on that head in a moment or two. First let me offer you a cup of tea."

"Thank you," I answered.

She led me on to the same small lawn



"HOW MUCH HE HAS GROWN!"

where we had tea together a year back. As she poured out tea, I noticed once again her hollow laugh, her aspect, which was that of a woman stricken with deadly illness.

"Forgive me," I said, suddenly, "you are very unwell?"

"I am—sometimes I think I am dying," she answered. She pressed her hand to her

heart. "The burden is too heavy," she continued, "I must share it with someone—you have come in answer to my summons; I mean to confide in you. Will you follow me now to my morning-room; we shall be safe from interruption there?"

She rose as she spoke, and walked across the lawn. I followed. We entered a beautifully decorated little room off one of the big drawing-rooms. She seated herself in a low chair, and asked me to find a place near.

"Rest assured," I said, as I did so, "that my services are at your disposal."

"Before I take you into my full confidence," said Lady Tregenna, "I have a request to make."

"Ask anything," I answered.

"I want you to promise that you will not divulge what I am about to tell you until I give you permission."

I thought for a moment, then I said, slowly: "I will respect your secret."

"Thank you." She raised her eyes and looked full at me. "You know a part of my trouble," she continued, "you shall now hear the whole."

"I know a part of your trouble?" I said. "I don't quite understand."

"You will in a moment. Do you remember the cablegram which your friend, Dr. Collett, sent you to Madras?"

"Of course," I replied, gravely.

"Mr. Gilchrist, it was true."

"True?" I answered, springing to my feet.

"Yes, quite true. Now, sit down and let me tell you everything quietly. I must tell my story in my own way, and I must begin at the beginning."

I sat down as Lady Tregenna had requested. She clasped her hands in her lap; two bright spots appeared on either cheek. She looked even more ill than she had done a moment ago.

"We were married ten years," she began, in a low, monotonous voice. "We came to the conclusion that we should never have a child. Sir John became more and more discontented. He had hours when a strange excitement seized him, more particularly when he was tortured by the presence of the cousin, whom he so cordially detests, Dayrell Tregenna. My husband loathed him for his want of tact, and his constant reference to the time when the place should be his.

"At last, over two years ago, I found, to my inexpressible joy, that I was about to become a mother. My husband's raptures

were beyond words. He meant to stay with me, but the expedition during which you first made his acquaintance had been already arranged—he was the principal member of the party, and found it impossible to resign his post. He had to leave me, to his own inexpressible anxiety. When he went away he was a happy man and I was a happy woman—buoyed up by the sweetest hope. Afterwards——"

"Tell me everything," I said, gently.

She pressed her hand to her forehead and continued:—

"The child was born in London. I was very ill at its birth, and for some time afterwards was unconscious. When I came to my senses all was quiet in the sick room. The nurse whom I had engaged was standing by the bed-side—she held a beautifully-dressed baby in her arms. I remembered then what had happened and raised my head. A rush of joy ran through my heart.

"Show me the child," I said. "Is it a boy?"

"Yes, madam, it is a boy," she replied; she bent down as she spoke and showed me the little fellow—then at a sign from me she laid it by my side. I kissed it, and was happy as mother could be.

"Has Sir John been cabled to yet?" I asked.

"She replied to this that Mr. Dayrell was in the house, and only waited for my authority to send a cablegram immediately.

"Tell him to do so without an instant's delay," I answered.

"There was something in her manner which made me wonder even then. It was grave, anxious: she looked as if a load had been suddenly put upon her; but I was so delighted, so full of bliss at having a living child of my own, that I had no more thoughts to spare for her. I spent the greater part of that night with the child in my arms. I made a quick recovery, but was astonished to see that Dr. Collett no longer attended me. Another very excellent physician came to see me, however, and I did not suspect the truth.

"When the boy was about a fortnight old, and I was up again on the sofa, the nurse came to me one day and confessed what had really happened. A few moments after the birth of my baby Dr. Collett had become seriously unwell—he had been obliged to hurry away, leaving the case with the nurse. When he left the house the baby had shown signs of weakness and want of proper circulation—he thought its life might be saved,

however, and intended to return again within half an hour. As a matter of fact, ten minutes after Dr. Collett left the house the child died. The nurse sent a hasty message to the doctor telling him that the child was dead. Two hours after doing so she was startled by getting a message herself from the great physician's house to say that he had died suddenly, and that another doctor must take up the case.

"Dayrell, who had spent the entire day in the house, was pacing up and down in the drawing-room when she ran in to tell him what had occurred.

" 'This will kill Sir John Tregenna,' he said.

" 'And Lady Tregenna, for that matter,' replied the woman; 'they built so much on the child.'

"He looked at her for a long time, she said then, and did not speak. Then he came up to her side and began to whisper a plan which he said had suddenly darted through his mind.

" 'You are not well off?' he began.

"She owned that she was not; also, that she had a child of her own, a lame child, who depended altogether on her exertions to support it.

" 'You shall stay on here, at a high salary, as the child's nurse,' he said.

" 'The child's nurse, Mr. Dayrell? You forget that the child is dead,' she answered.

"He held up his hand to stop her.

" 'And I will give you five hundred pounds in addition if you help me,' he continued.

"He then proposed to her to conceal the fact of the child's death from me for the present, but to cable to Sir John that he was the father of a fine boy, and to substitute a living child in the dead baby's place. He knew, he said, where he could easily find a baby. The fact of Dr. Collett's death would make the certificate of birth wonderfully simple. He would undertake that the dead child should be disposed of without remark.

"This scheme was carried into effect by

the pair; and when I was made acquainted with the fact, I had been lavishing my affection on the baby of a strange woman for over a fortnight. What my feelings were when this revelation was made to me I cannot attempt to describe. I was speechless. The child of another woman lay on my knee. It was with difficulty that I could

even bring myself to look at it. As I paused and considered, my heart beating hard, my emotions almost suffocating me, the nurse's eyes fixed with the keenest anxiety on my face, there came a knock at the door and Dayrell entered.

" 'I know everything,' he said. 'Now, Lady Tregenna, you won't be a fool; you want an heir—your husband wants an heir. If he believes you to

be the mother of his child, he will love you as he has never loved you yet. The heir lies on your lap'—he pointed to the baby as he spoke—and, he added, in a significant manner, '*my silence can be bought.*'

"I was too weak to resist him and the nurse; in short, I yielded to the nefarious scheme. From that hour my misery began. Dayrell has blackmailed me to a frightful extent. I have sold all my jewels to satisfy his demands. I have parted with the large allowance which Sir John gives me. I have further asked my husband for large sums of money; he is a wealthy man, and up to the present suspects nothing. I have even gone to the length of borrowing largely (at this moment I am heavily in debt), and all to quiet that monster who feeds himself upon my wretchedness. The nurse and the man know the truth. They promise secrecy only so long as I can supply their inordinate desire for money. The woman gets a hundred a year, in addition to heavy bribes. I have paid Dayrell thousands of pounds since the birth of the child. As to Sir John, he suspects nothing. He is wrapped up in the child, and of late it is with difficulty I can get him to return to his old interests in



"THE CHILD OF ANOTHER WOMAN LAY ON MY KNEE."

scientific pursuits. I never saw anything like his passion for the baby. He can scarcely talk of anything else. Several times a day he visits him in his nursery, he takes him about the grounds on his shoulders—the child and the man are inseparable. I believe if he knew the truth now, that his reason would fail him. Insanity, at rare intervals, has been known in his family, and he is very excitable. Dayrell's presence at such a moment might lead to terrible results.

"On the day my husband went rather unexpectedly to Scotland, that wretch came to me and demanded two thousand pounds. He said he required the money for a special emergency, and if I did not give it to him, would write a letter to Sir John telling him the whole story, and would abscond himself. I could only raise that sum by selling the family diamonds, which my husband would immediately miss. Mr. Gilchrist, was there ever a woman in such a terrible position as I am in?"

"You must on no account give that man any more money," I said, after a pause. "I confess I cannot see, at this moment, how to save you without communicating the truth to Sir John, but I should like to think over matters. This blackmailing must be stopped at any cost. On the face of it, it seems to me a queer thing that Dayrell Tregenna should wish to substitute a living child for your dead one, when he himself is the next heir to the property."

"Yes, but he and my husband are very much the same age, and my husband's is in reality a better life than his. Then he is penniless, or nearly so—he has married beneath him and has a large family. At intervals he has dreadful bouts of drinking—in fact, he is a bad fellow all round."

"You think, then, that he concocted the scheme for the sole purpose of making money?"

"I am certain of it. But his last demand is the most outrageous he has yet made. The fact is this, I can stand the strain no longer; I am getting seriously ill—my resources are at an end. And yet I am certain that if my husband discovers the truth he will turn me out of his house! Oh, my wretched life! I often long to commit suicide in order to end everything."

"You must have patience, and allow me if possible to act for you now," I said. "It has been my privilege to get people out of scrapes nearly as bad as yours before now. I am glad you have had courage to tell me

the exact truth—I will think things over carefully, and will have a talk with you to-morrow."

That night, to my astonishment and disgust, Dayrell Tregenna was one of the guests at dinner. He showed in his most objectionable form, put on airs as though he was master of the establishment, and I could see disgusted more than one of the guests. Lady Tregenna never noticed him by word or deed. The whole party retired early to bed, and I spent an anxious and wakeful night.

The next morning I rose at an early hour, but when I went downstairs I was still completely in the dark as to how to act. As I entered the stately old hall I was much astonished to see standing on the threshold, looking exactly as if he had never left home, the well-known figure of Sir John Tregenna. He heard my step, for he turned eagerly.

"Gilchrist, of all people!" he cried. "Well, how are you? I am right glad to see you. Yes, I have returned unexpectedly; the wife does not know yet that I am in the house, but I have just sent a message to the nurse to bring the boy down. By the way, what do you think of my heir now, eh?"

"He has made fine progress," I answered; "he walks all alone—he seems a well-grown little chap."

At that moment the nurse appeared at the end of a long corridor, the boy toddling by her side. The moment the child saw his supposed father he uttered a shriek of delight and ran forward. The Baronet forgot all about me and hurried to meet him. He came back again after a moment, his own face crimson, his eyes shining, the boy elevated on his shoulder. It was just then that I noticed something; something which I had completely failed to observe when I had seen the baby a year ago. The child now bore an unmistakable and very striking likeness to the Tregennas—the eyes were in expression, although not in colour, the exact counterpart of the eager eyes of the man who was looking up at him with such pride and delight—the mouth also bore a likeness to Lady Tregenna—but the boy's eyes and smile, and the sturdy way he held his head on his broad shoulders, were an exact *replica* of Sir John.

The moment I made this discovery there flashed through my mind a possible solution of the mystery. Sir John was so absorbed in talking to the boy, in kissing him, and examining his sturdy limbs, that he did not notice anything I did or said. I went quickly in the direction where the nurse was standing.

"I am anxious to have a word with you," I said.

She looked at me—a queer expression came into her dark eyes; her mouth closed firmly.

"I should like to speak to you now," I continued.

"Certainly, sir," she answered, in a submissive voice.

"Alone," I continued.

"Yes, sir," she said, again. She turned slowly, walked down the corridor, and opened a side door which led into a shrubbery.

"No one will disturb us here, sir," she said. "Will you please say what you have come to say quickly, as I am anxious to go to attend on my mistress."

"I want to ask you a straight question," I said. "I had an interview with Lady Tregenna yesterday, in which she told me what she believes to be the true history of the child. What is your name, nurse?"

"Mrs. Hodgkins, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Hodgkins," I continued, "I have my own private reasons for believing that Lady Tregenna's version is not the correct one."

"Good heavens, Mr. Gilchrist, what can you mean?"

The woman had great control over herself, but in spite of all her efforts her face turned a queer colour.

"The whole story is very strange and inexplicable," I continued. "Under ordinary circumstances, it would be my duty to tell it to Sir John Tregenna, and to ask him to bring a detective down from London to find out full particulars. For instance, before believing the version which you and Mr. Tregenna palmed off upon Lady Tregenna, there are some questions to be answered. Where was the real baby to whom Lady Tregenna gave birth buried? Where did you find the child who has been adopted in its place? Speak at once, and tell me the truth."

"Now, what is all this about?" said another voice in our ears.

I turned quickly, and to my annoyance saw Dayrell standing before me. He looked more bloated and more disreputable than ever.

"I thought, Gilchrist, you were up to mischief, by the expression on your face last night," he said, "so, all things considered, I resolved to get up early and have a chat with you before breakfast. I find you in conversation with Mrs. Hodgkins. What does it mean?"

"I am talking with Mrs. Hodgkins over a private matter, and I should be glad if you would leave us," I answered.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," he replied. He placed his feet far apart and crossed his arms.

"You can remain or not, as you please," I continued. "After all, what I have got to say may interest you as well as this woman. Sir John Tregenna has just returned, and is at present with his supposed heir."

The man's face assumed an ugly look.

"Sir John back so soon?" he said. "I did not think he was expected for another week."

"He is here—I have just spoken to him."

"And what do you mean by making use of the expression 'his supposed heir'?" continued Dayrell.

"Because, Mr. Tregenna, Lady Tregenna has told me everything from her point of view. Now listen, both of you. It is my firm conviction that she has been deceived. If I do not get at the truth at once I shall—"

Dayrell interrupted me with a laugh.

"So you are trying that little game on," he said; "very clever of you, no doubt, but you won't get anything out of me, try as you may."

"I will tell you all you desire to know, sir," said the nurse, suddenly.

At these unexpected words Dayrell's countenance changed. He turned and faced her. He gave the woman a look under which she quailed for a moment, but presently she drew herself up and spoke with defiance.

"I am not going to be afraid of you, Mr.



"HE CAME BACK WITH THE BOY ELEVATED ON HIS SHOULDER."

Dayrell," she said. "The fact is, I cannot bear this thing any longer. Yes, sir," she continued, turning to me, "it was all his doing. I am glad you have spoken to me, sir. I am glad to be able to relieve my conscience. I see the thing is killing Lady Tregenna, and the misery I have endured since the child's birth no words can tell. Sir, I will tell you everything now."

Dayrell made a step forward as if he meant to strike her.

"Stand back," I said, getting between him

attending him and his mother, when there came another knock at the door—I opened it, and that villain stood without. He called me into the passage, and there offered me the temptation to which I yielded. He would pay me five hundred pounds down if I would act on his suggestion, and send a message to Dr. Collett that the child had died. I believe his first idea was to send the living child away and substitute a dead baby in his place, which he was confident he could procure. I was frightened and miserable. I wanted



"STAND BACK!"

and the nurse. "Now speak, and quickly," I continued.

"Well, Mr. Gilchrist, it was in this way. I am a widow with one child, and have had hard work to earn my livelihood. When I came to nurse Lady Tregenna, I happened to meet Mr. Dayrell once or twice before the birth of the child. He spoke to me, and expressed his disgust at the possibility of an heir being born. The child came into the world, and fine baby that he was, for a short time there were doubts entertained of his life. Dr. Collett, as you know, had to leave the house shortly after the birth, owing to the illness which so unexpectedly carried him off. Almost immediately after his departure Mr. Dayrell came to me and asked how the child was. I told him he was in a bad case, but I thought he would revive—I then hurried back to attend to him. In an hour after the birth the child was breathing freely, and all danger had passed. I saw that he would live and do well. I was engaged

the money badly, and before I knew what I was doing, consented to his horrible suggestion. I sent a message to the doctor to say that the child was dead. Almost immediately afterwards a telegram came from his house to inform me that Dr. Collett had died suddenly himself, and that another physician would be sent in to attend on Lady Tregenna. It was immediately after hearing this piece

of news that Mr. Dayrell completed his diabolical scheme. He saw that there was now no necessity to fetch another baby. Dr. Collett's death had simplified matters. When Lady Tregenna was sufficiently strong, she was to be told that the real baby had died and that another had been substituted in its place.

"As I can no longer inherit the property," said Mr. Dayrell, "the only other thing left to me to do is to make money. I will make thousands out of that unlucky child. Her ladyship will believe that he is not her own, and I shall blackmail her to any extent."

"And he did so, sir, he did. He paid me, of course. He arranged also that Lady Tregenna was to give me one hundred pounds a year while I remained as nurse to the child—but, oh! no money was worth the misery I endured. I saw my beautiful mistress fading before my eyes. She tried hard, but she could not love the child whom she did not believe to be her own. At last I

began to fear for her reason. Oh, things are as black as black can be, and now that wretch has had the audacity to ask her to give him two thousand pounds within a week. Oh, what is to be done?"

When she had finished speaking, the woman put up her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed. I turned suddenly to address Dayrell, but he had disappeared.

"Are you going to tell my mistress the truth, sir?" said the nurse, when she had recovered a little composure. "If you expose me I shall be sent to prison; but, of course, I cannot expect you to be silent—I don't even know that I wish it."

"Lady Tregenna must, of course, know the truth," I answered, "but the question is whether Sir John is to be informed or not. My own feeling is that it would be cruelty ever to tell this horrible plot to Sir John. We must remember that he has never doubted for a moment that the child is his own. Your confession will give immense relief to Lady Tregenna—and I think Dayrell for his own sake will consent to leave the country. If he does not do so, of course Sir John must be told. Now come with me at once to Lady Tregenna."

Early as it was, Lady Tregenna was up and in her morning-room. I tapped at the door and was admitted at once, the nurse following me. The lady looked in some astonishment at us both.

"Nurse," she said, "I have just been told that Sir John has returned, but I have not yet seen him. Why, what is the matter?" she added. "Is anything wrong with the"—she spoke with evident antipathy—"with the child?"

"No, madam, he is perfectly well—he is with his father."

The words had scarcely left her lips before a hurried sound was audible in the passage without, and the next moment Sir John burst into the room carrying the baby in his arms.

"Oh, God!" he cried. "Oh, merciful God!" He panted heavily as he spoke, his eyes looked wild; he was by nature a red-faced man, but he was now white as death.

"I have had the most awful shock," he continued. "Kate, what do you think has happened? I returned early this morning, and was only waiting for you to wake to come and see you—of course, I had the little fellow with me. I was standing on the terrace in front of the house when I suddenly missed the child. I went to search for him, and by good luck or, rather, the intervention

of Providence went into the engine-house. The dynamo machine was working, and, oh, God in Heaven! what awful sight do you think my eyes rested upon? There was that wretch Dayrell Tregenna—he had the little chap in his arms—and what do you think he had done? *Removed the cover from the terminals!* The child was stretching out his hand to touch them. One touch would have killed him. With a cry, I sprang forward, and caught the boy in my arms just in time. I scarcely know what I am saying, this shock has unmanned me."

The great, hearty man sank down into the nearest chair. He panted for breath—the child gazed at him in astonishment, then cuddled up into his arms, and raising one chubby hand stroked his cheek.

"Dad," he said, in his baby voice.

The strong likeness to his race came out once again in his manly little face.

Lady Tregenna, who had been seated on the sofa, now rose slowly, her hands were clasped tightly behind her; she crept across the room looking like a woman who was stunned.

"John," she said, "what have you done with—with Dayrell?"

"Ordered him never to show his face in this house again unless he wishes to be arrested on a charge of attempted murder," roared the Baronet. "To think that he should have led that little fellow straight up to his death, and the look on his face—it was fiendish, there is no other word for it."

Lady Tregenna leant against the wall. She panted, and her eyes began to dilate with untold horror. I felt that in another moment she might lose consciousness.

"Look here, Tregenna," I exclaimed, "you may be truly thankful the boy has escaped, but he has escaped, remember, and is perfectly well. Now, I am something of a doctor, and I must ask you to take the child away. Look at your wife—see how agitated she is."

"Why, Kate, old woman, has this been too much for you?" said Tregenna. He rose hastily, strode up to her, put his arms round her and kissed her.

"I never thought you cared enough," he continued. "The fact is, you have puzzled me now and then; but I see—of course, of course, it is all right—bless you, old woman, bless you."

Lady Tregenna did not say a word. She did not even return her husband's embrace.

"Leave her a little," I said, "I am going

to prescribe something which will give her relief, the shock has been very considerable."

"Would you like to keep the boy, Kate?" said the Baronet.

"No, take him, John," she answered, in a voice which could not rise above a whisper.

He left the room, with the lad mounted on his shoulder. The hearty laugh of the baby was heard as the two went down the long corridor together.

"How can I confess the truth to him?" gasped Lady Tregenna, when the door had closed behind the pair. "When he knows the truth it will kill him—it will kill him or drive him mad."

is the child to whom you gave birth. Nurse, tell your story in half-a-dozen words."

The woman did so.

Lady Tregenna listened at first with incredulity, her face like death. Then gradually but slowly hope began to chase away despair from her features, and a burst of tears came to her relief.

"My God, I thank Thee!" she cried, suddenly. "Oh, I can love the child now."

She went on her knees and covered her face with her shaking hands.

We finally agreed that it was unnecessary for Sir John Tregenna ever to know the awful trick which had been played upon his



"WHEN HE KNOWS THE TRUTH IT WILL KILL HIM."

"He knows the truth already," I answered, in a quiet voice.

"He knows the truth?" she repeated.

"Yes. Now try and listen quietly, Lady Tregenna. You were the victim of a terrible hoax. That child is your own child. He never died—he never was changed—he

wife. Dayrell, after his fiendish attempt to lure the heir to his destruction, left the country at once and for ever. As to the nurse, she received a month's wages in lieu of notice, but the prickings of her own conscience were the only other punishment accorded to her.

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveler. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

IV.—THE SLEEPING SICKNESS.



I was in the summer of 1894 that the following strange events occurred.

"Harry Lidderdale has unexpectedly returned to England and will, I hope, dine with us to-night," wrote my friend, Charles Holdsworth. "Do not fail to be present if you can possibly manage it."

I crumpled up the brief note of invitation and rose to my feet.

"So Lidderdale has come back," I said, speaking aloud in my astonishment. I had good reason for my wonder. Harry was an old friend of mine. All during our early years we had been chums; then suddenly and mysteriously he had disappeared from the country. From the date of his departure he had not written a line to any of his old friends; not a soul who knew him in England could even guess at his whereabouts—to all intents and purposes the man was dead. There was a story which in a measure accounted for this.

Lidderdale in the days of his early manhood had fallen desperately in love with a girl of the name of Alma Ramsay. She was a beautiful girl, and report whispered that she loved him in return; there were no tidings, however, of an absolute engagement, and suddenly the news reached me that Alma was about to marry a certain General Colthurst, and that Lidderdale had left the country. Colthurst turned out a cruel husband—untender, suspicious, jealous. Fortunately for his young wife, he did not survive the union more than a few years. Now he was dead; Mrs. Colthurst was a widow and well off, and Lidderdale had come home.

Charles Holdsworth was a member of Parliament; a quiet, sober, middle-aged gentleman. I often

dined at his house, and we had often discussed Lidderdale's mysterious disappearance. I hastily replied to his note, saying that I should certainly dine with him that evening, and when the hour arrived put in an appearance in Curzon Street in good time. Several guests were present, but I looked round in vain for my friend. Holdsworth came to my side.

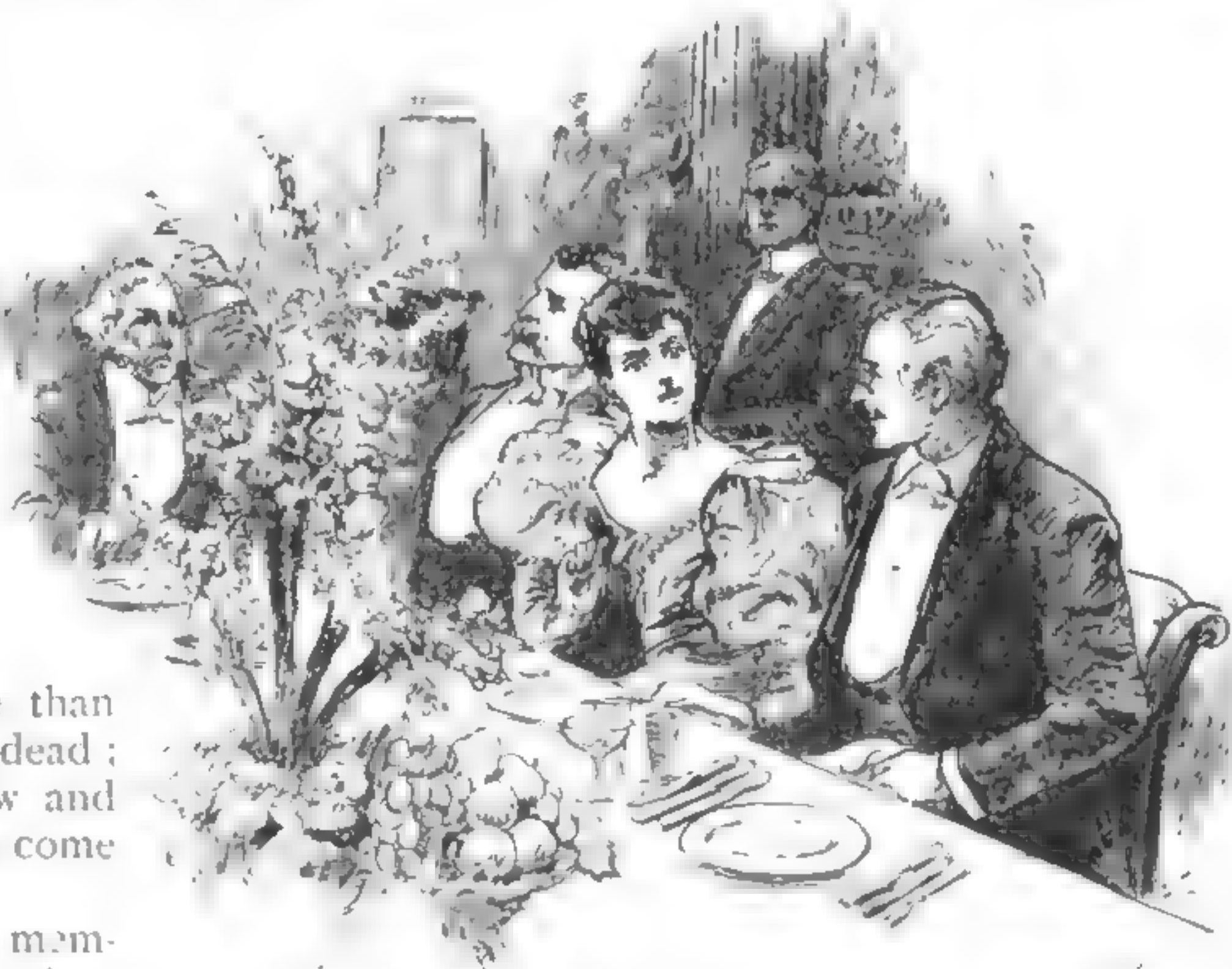
"You will be disappointed," he said; "but I have no time at present to explain matters. Lidderdale will not dine with us. Ask me more after dinner—and now you will like to see Mrs. Colthurst—she is present."

"Does she also know of his return?" I asked, in a low voice.

"I have not told her, but there is no reason why you should not mention it. I have arranged that you are to take her down to dinner."

A few moments later I found myself seated at table beside Mrs. Colthurst, whom I had not met since her widowhood. I noticed as I glanced at her that her beautiful face was thin to emaciation. I was just turning to say something about Lidderdale, when she uttered a little cry of distress.

"Mr. Gilchrist," she said, "we are thirteen at table—you know of old how horribly



"MR. GILCHRIST," SHE SAID, "WE ARE THIRTEEN AT TABLE."

superstitious I am. I wish I had not come to dinner."

I soothed her, and even laughed a little at her fears.

"The age of superstition is quite over," I said; "you ought not to think of such mediæval follies. Besides, I have something to tell you which will quite turn your attention—our sitting down thirteen to dinner is a mere accident; it is caused by the non-arrival of one of the principal guests."

"And who may that be?" she asked, turning and looking at me.

"No less a person than your old friend and mine, Harry Lidderdale."

Her dark brows were contracted with pain and astonishment.

"Harry Lidderdale? Has he returned to England?" she asked, in an awe-struck voice.

"I believe so—I have not heard many particulars as yet. Holdsworth asked me to meet him here this evening. I am as much astonished as you are," I continued.

I noticed that she played with her food. Suddenly, as if unable to hold them any longer, she put down her knife and fork.

"It is long since I have met or heard from Mr. Lidderdale," she said. "It stirs my heart to hear his name mentioned; sometimes I have feared, that he was dead. Will you try to find out from Mr. Holdsworth all you can about his return, and why he is not dining with us?"

"I will do so," I replied. "I shall doubtless have an opportunity when you leave the room after dinner."

"I shall be greatly obliged," she answered, with earnestness—her eyes grew large and bright, her face seemed suddenly to fill out and look youthful, the colour flamed in her cheeks, and her whole manner indicated suppressed excitement.

I was about to say something more, when a pretty girl who was seated a little way further down the table bent forward and said, in a tone of delight:—

"Mrs. Colthurst, I have great news for you. Do you know what Mrs. Holdsworth has succeeded in doing? She has induced Haridas, the celebrated chiromancist, to come here after dinner—we can all have our fortunes told."

"Haridas!" cried Mrs. Colthurst, "is it possible? I have longed to go to him, but have been afraid."

"Do you really believe in chiromancy?" I asked of her, when she turned once more towards me.

"Emphatically," she answered. "I would

give a great deal to show my hand to Haridas—more particularly now." She coloured. "You have heard his name, of course, Mr. Gilchrist?"

"I confess I have not," I replied.

"You surprise me—I thought everyone knew of him. He is a Brahmin of very high caste, and seems to possess almost superhuman powers. I know several people whose fortunes he has told, and in each case his predictions came to pass. Please don't laugh—I know you scientific men care nothing for that sort of thing—but to us——" She broke off abruptly—I noticed that she clasped her hands tightly together under the table. She was too nervous to proceed with her dinner.

"Then you intend to submit your hand to the inspection of this man?" I said.

"Most certainly. I would not miss the opportunity for the world—and what is more, whatever he tells me I shall firmly believe."

After the ladies had withdrawn, I found myself sitting next to Holdsworth.

"Now, what about Lidderdale?" I asked.

Holdsworth looked at me and slowly filled his glass before he replied.

"I have very little to tell," he said. "I saw Lidderdale's card lying on the hall table this morning with the address of the Hotel Métropole scribbled in one corner. There was also some writing on the back saying that he would call later in the day. I was unable to stay in, but left a note inviting him to dine here this evening, and telling him that Alma Colthurst was to be one of the guests. When I returned home, just in time to dress for dinner, my servant informed me that he had not come back, and a few moments later I received a telegram saying that he would call to-morrow, as he had been prevented from doing so to-day. I shall be glad to welcome him back again—he was a very good sort of fellow. I cannot imagine why he gave all his friends the go-by in the extraordinary manner he did."

"I am convinced that he can explain that," I said. "I shall be heartily glad to see him again. Of course, all who knew him well will remember how attached he was to Mrs. Colthurst."

"Ah, yes, poor girl," said Holdsworth, "and she to him. She had a very unhappy marriage, as you know only too well, Gilchrist. Well, she is free now—she is rich, too. Doubtless Lidderdale and she will soon be happily married, and we shall be only too glad to dance at their wedding."

"I have not seen Mrs. Colthurst for some time," I said. "She is much changed—she seems to be in a very nervous condition. Should you consider her in good health?"

"Well, Gilchrist, you are more of a doctor than I am—she has always been rather delicate. I am not aware that there is anything special the matter with her."

"Her nerves are in a shaky condition," I repeated—"she was considerably distressed at our sitting down thirteen to dinner; and when she heard that you are going to have an exhibition of chiromancy in the drawing-room, it caused her to forget her uneasiness with regard to the old superstition. Strange, how easily women are influenced."

"Call it black art or what you will," said Holdsworth, gravely, "I also, to a certain extent, believe in chiromancy."



"'CALL IT BLACK ART OR WHAT YOU WILL,' SAID HOLDSWORTH, GRAVELY."

I looked at him in some astonishment. If ever there was a man endowed with common sense it was Charles Holdsworth.

"I do not profess to understand the principle on which these persons work out their curious prophecies," he continued, "but so many of them have to my certain knowledge come true, that—but what am I thinking of? We ought to be in the drawing-room now." Here he rose from his seat.

"Gentlemen," he called out, "I have the pleasure of telling you all that Haridas, the well-known chiromancist, is coming here this evening to give an exhibition of his powers.

I believe he is due now. I am sure you will none of you like to miss him. Shall we all go upstairs?"

Looks of curiosity, astonishment, and pleasure were seen more or less on every face. We all rose from the table, and a moment or two later entered the drawing-room. Here we found ourselves in the midst of a crowd of visitors, several fresh guests having arrived since dinner. I could not help noticing a hushed and expectant expression on the faces of nearly everyone present. Mrs. Colthurst was standing not far from the door; she made way for me to come to her side.

"Well?" she asked, in an eager whisper, "has Mr. Holdsworth told you anything?"

"Yes, all he knows," I replied. "Lidderdale's card was found on his hall table this morning, with the address of the Hotel Métropole scribbled on it. There was some message

on the back to say that he would call again in the evening; and as Holdsworth could not remain in, he left a letter inviting him to dine. But as it happened Lidderdale did not call again, but sent a telegram to say that he was detained, and would come to-morrow."

While I was speaking, Mrs. Colthurst sank down on to the nearest chair; her face was white, her eyes full of trouble.

"What can this mean?" she said, in a whisper.

"I don't understand you," I answered.

"His not coming back," she replied, "and his—his going to see Mr. Holdsworth first of all. Why did he not come to me or—or

to you, who have always been his greatest friend? Perhaps," she added, suddenly, "Haridas can explain."

At this moment there was a slight bustle in the neighbourhood of the door, and we both rose to our feet.

A Brahmin, wearing a white flowing robe, sandals on his feet, a short jacket richly embroidered on his shoulders, and a turban of many colours wound round his picturesque head, entered the room. He was accompanied by a young woman, who was dressed from head to foot in white. She had handsome features and sparkling eyes. Like the

Brahmin, she also wore a turban of many colours, and several strings of shining beads encircled her brown throat. Her arms were bare to the elbow, but were round and beautifully formed. When the pair entered the room they turned, faced the company and salaamed very low. I then heard the young woman say a word or two in English to Mrs. Holdsworth. The Brahmin did not open his lips. He was a strikingly handsome man; his face was thin, his features aquiline. There was a sort of solemn dignity about him which put us Europeans completely into the shade.

As I looked at the pair I could not but confess that I had seldom seen a more picturesque couple.

Mrs. Holdsworth immediately conducted Haridas and the young woman to the top of the room, where they mounted a little platform arranged beforehand to receive them. Having done so, our hostess turned and introduced the chiromancist and the Hindu girl to her guests.

"The name of Haridas," she said, "is, of course, well known to all people interested in the marvellous science of chiromancy. The Brahmin has come here to-night to tell the fortunes of all present who care to submit their hands to his manipulations, but as he cannot speak English, Mungela"—here she laid her hand on the girl's arm—"has accompanied him as interpreter."

There was a moment's hesitation. Mrs. Holdsworth left the platform—Haridas came slowly to the front and stood with folded arms, not looking at any of the company. His splendid eyes seemed, if I may use the expression, to be full of vision.

After a little more delay, one of the men of the party came forward. He mounted the platform, said a word or two to Mungela, and then held out his hand for Haridas to examine. The chiromancist turned it slowly over, looking first at the palm and then at the upper part of the hand. He then began to speak in rapid Hindustani, which Mungela interpreted in a low voice. What the pair said was unheard by the rest of the party. The gentleman returned to his seat with a smile on his face.

"The whole thing is absolutely wonderful," I heard him say to a neighbour. "The man knows nothing whatever about me, not even my name, and yet he told me a great deal of my past history and prophesied——" Here there was a bustle, someone else was going on the platform, and I could not hear the next word. This time it was a lady. She also underwent

a brief examination of her hand. Haridas spoke in Hindustani and Mungela interpreted. The lady returned to her friends with a flushed face and pleased eyes. Soon many others followed her example, each one coming back into the body of the room, looking mystified, pleased or the reverse, but all more or less impressed.

"Now I am going," said Mrs. Colthurst to me.

I noticed how queer she looked—there was a grey shadow under the eyes, and the lips were slightly blue in tint; the rest of the face was ghastly.

"Whatever you do, pray don't believe that man's nonsense," I said. "Try to regard it as a joke."

"I cannot do that," she answered. "I am glad he has come. After he has spoken to me I shall know the truth."

She left my side and approached the upper part of the room. She seemed almost to stagger as she walked. The next moment she had mounted the little platform and stood with her back to the company.

Impelled by strong interest, I left my seat and approached the end of the room where the platform was. I saw Haridas take her hand exactly as he had done those of the other people. Then I observed a quick and peculiar light flash through his eyes—he glanced at Mungela, and it seemed to me that there was consternation in his gaze. I don't think he once looked at the white face of the woman whose fate he seemed to hold in his grasp, but there was evidently something about the lines of her palm which distressed him. He began to talk in his musical rapid Hindustani, and Mungela listened. At each pause she translated the meaning of his words to Mrs. Colthurst. The whole thing did not occupy two minutes.

When the young widow left the platform the grey look had crept all over her face. She saw me, and came to my side.

"He has told me my past, and accurately," she said. "But what can be the matter—he won't say a word about my future? What do I care about the past? The past is done, but I will know—yes, I will know—what is about to befall me. I believe he is afraid to tell me. I believe he knows something terrible. Go, Mr. Gilchrist, go and ask him for the truth—he will give it to you, I am certain."

Mungela and Haridas were standing close together. When they saw me, they came slowly to the edge of the platform. I spoke to Mungela.



"HE BEGAN TO TALK IN HIS MUSICAL RAPID HINDUSTANI."

"I do not wish to ask Haridas about my fortune," I said.

"Then what is your pleasure, sir?" she asked, fixing her bright eyes on my face.

"I have a word to say with regard to the young lady whose hand Haridas has just examined."

"The lady with the grey face?" interrupted Mungela.

"Yes, the one who has just left the platform—she is greatly distressed. Haridas has not told her the whole—he has spoken of her past, but has said nothing of her future; she is very much alarmed. Perhaps he will tell me in confidence what he has thought well to hide from her."

It was impossible for the swarthy features of the Hindu woman to turn pale, but there was consternation in her eyes. She turned to Haridas and spoke. He said something in Hindustani—she looked at me.

"Haridas is sorry," said Mungela, "he cannot tell the future of the pretty lady."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because there is none—everything is finished. There is nothing to say."

Her words were so startling and unexpected, and I was so much afraid that Mrs. Colthurst might hear them, that I hastily showed my own hand to the chiromancist, who began to mutter over it, but I interrupted him.

"Mungela," I said, "ask Haridas why there is no future for Mrs. Colthurst."

She repeated the question.

"He only says the same thing," she replied. "There is none—there is nothing to say—it is all done."

The next moment I returned to Mrs. Colthurst's side.

"Well," she said, trying to smile, "have they told you? What terrible fate hangs over me?"

"I have found out nothing," I answered, laughing as I spoke. "Haridas evidently has a limit to his powers: he cannot foretell your future."

"He will not—oh, that I could make him!" she replied.

Her face looked haggard and dreadfully worn. Soon afterwards she bade her hostess good-night,

held out her hand to me, and left the room.

I had just risen on the following morning, and was about to sit down to breakfast, when to my astonishment my servant ushered in Charles Holdsworth. His hair was rumpled up, his eyes looked full of excitement.

"Gilchrist," he cried, "what awful thing do you think has happened?"

"What?" I asked.

"Alma Colthurst is dead."

"Impossible!" I cried.

"She is dead, murdered. She was found in her drawing-room early this morning, having evidently been stabbed, as there was a deep wound in the left side, which must have penetrated to the heart. Her servant rushed over to inform me. The police are on the scent. Gilchrist, they suspect Lidderdale."

"Nonsense, Holdsworth, you must be mistaken," I answered.

"They do; it is a fact."

"Well, tell me everything," I said, after a pause.

"I have very little to tell. The servant's story is as follows: Alma returned home between eleven and twelve last night. She found a card from Lidderdale lying on the hall table, with a line in pencil that he would call to see her about midnight. She told the servant that he was to be admitted, and went up to her drawing-room to wait for him. He arrived almost to the minute, and was shown upstairs. The footman waited up, lingering about the hall and staircase for something over half an hour. About half-past twelve Lidderdale came calmly downstairs, bade the footman good-night, and left the house. At Alma's special request her maid had already

gone to bed. When Lidderdale went away, the footman extinguished the lights in the rest of the house, but did not return to the drawing-room, as Alma never cared to be disturbed, and as a rule put out the lights there herself. On entering the room at an early hour this morning, he found his mistress stretched on the floor, quite dead. A doctor was summoned, and the unfortunate girl was discovered to have been dead for many hours. A brief examination showed that she had been stabbed through the heart."

"How awful!" I cried.
"Holdsworth, I shall



"HE FOUND HIS MISTRESS STRETCHED ON THE FLOOR, QUITE DEAD."

begin to believe in chiromancy. That man last night would not tell her future, and when I questioned him, said that she had none. His prediction turned out strangely correct."

Holdsworth swept back the hair from his forehead.

"I am so stunned, I scarcely know what I am doing," he said—"and sorry as I am for her, poor soul, it is Lidderdale that I think most of at the present moment. Gilchrist, it is quite impossible that he could have done it."

"I agree with you," I answered. "Lidderdale is a man of strong passions, but he would never, under any circumstances, stoop to murder."

"But think of the circumstantial evidence—the man was the very last in her presence. He will, of course, be arrested on suspicion. Let us go straight to the Métropole and find out what has happened."

We left my flat, hailed the first hansom we came across, and drove to the large hotel. On our arrival, we sent in our cards and inquired for Lidderdale. There was a slight delay, and then, rather to our surprise, the

manager came forward and said that no gentleman of that name was staying at the hotel.

"There have been inquiries for him already this morning," he said, in a somewhat pointed way, "but we have no Mr. Lidderdale here."

"Are you certain?" asked Holdsworth. "I have his visiting-card in my pocket—he left it at my house yesterday, with the name of your hotel scribbled in the corner."

The manager looked at it and shook his head.

"There has been no gentleman of that name staying here," he said. "The name of the hotel was doubtless used as a blind—such things have happened before."

"But not in the case of men like Lidderdale," I interrupted. "I think," I added, turning to Holdsworth, "that we ought to take the hotel manager into our confidence."

"Certainly," he answered.

"Very well, gentlemen," replied the manager, "will you both come this way?"

He led us at once into his private room. There Holdsworth gave him a brief account of the terrible event which had transpired in Melville Street.

"I fully believe in Mr. Lidderdale's innocence," he continued, "but I know that circumstantial evidence is strong against him."

"The police have been here already inquiring for him," said the manager. "It is all very unpleasant," he added.

"There is just a chance," I interrupted, "that he may be staying here under another name. If so, I should recognise him immediately. Can you put me in a position to see your visitors as they leave the hotel this morning?"

"I certainly can and will," answered the

manager. "You have only to stay in the hall, sir, and you will notice everyone who passes."

I said a few words to Holdsworth, who soon afterwards left the hotel—the manager then took me into the big entrance-hall where I spent the remainder of the morning.

Lidderdale, when I had last seen him, was a tall, slender, dark-complexioned man—young-looking for his age, with straight features and a good carriage—his hair grew somewhat low on his forehead, and was black and straight. He kept it cut very short, and had somewhat the appearance of a military man. In repose his face was rather wanting in animation, but when he spoke it lit up with extreme brilliancy—I felt certain that I should recognise him through any disguise.

The hotel happened to be very full, and many dark-eyed, slender men passed and re-passed in the course of the long morning. But no one in the least resembling Lidderdale put in an appearance, and soon after noon I went away.

The police were now actively on the scent, and both Holdsworth and I were visited and eagerly catechized. We could neither of us give the least information. One of Lidderdale's cards had been found lying on Holdsworth's table; the writing in the corner was easily identified with some of his letters which I possessed—a similar card had been found at Mrs. Colthurst's, with writing also in Lidderdale's hand in the corner. A man, in all respects answering to my description of Lidderdale, had called on Mrs. Colthurst at midnight on the evening of the 21st. In the morning she was found dead, stabbed to the heart.

The newspapers became full of sensational paragraphs, but there were no tidings whatever of the man himself. I could scarcely conceal my great anxiety. Where was the murderer? Where was the man who had undoubtedly left Lidderdale's card at two houses?

A week from the death of the unfortunate widow passed away, and still the police had not got the faintest trace of the missing man.

I had spent a long day in the country, and was returning home somewhat fagged when my servant, who knew all about the mysterious murder, greeted me with a peculiar expression on his face.

"Well, Silva," I said, "have you any news for me?"

"I have, sir," he replied. "Mr. Lidderdale has been found."

"Found? Where?" I asked, in excitement. "Have the police got him?"

"No, sir, he is waiting for you in your laboratory—he has been there for over half an hour."

"Lidderdale in my laboratory!" I cried. "Impossible!"

"It is true, sir. He called about six o'clock, and said that he would wait for you for a short time."

"The mystery truly deepens," I muttered to myself. I hurried across the hall, opened the door of my laboratory, and went in.

Lidderdale, looking very like what he was when I last saw him, sprang from the depths of an easy chair and came quickly to meet me.

"How do you do, Gilchrist?" he said. "This is a pleasure. I have not been two hours in London, and you naturally are the first person I wanted to see. Why, what is the matter?" he continued, observing the expression on my face.

"For Heaven's sake, sit down!" I said. "You tell me you have been only two hours in London? Impossible. Don't you know what has happened? But you must know."

"I assure you that I only arrived in London by the Dover Express this morning, having travelled overland from Marseilles. I went to an hotel, changed my clothes, and then strolled over to see you. When I heard you were out, I said I would wait for you. Well, it is good to see an old friend again."

I looked Lidderdale over from head to foot. The old description still answered with regard to his face and appearance. He looked scarcely any older than when he left England four years ago. He was still tall, still slender, his features were straight and his carriage good; his grave and very beautiful dark-grey eyes still retained their old trick of lighting up with the least word. His teeth gleamed white and wholesome in his mouth. It was impossible to connect murder with a man like him.

"For some reason or other you look dazed, Gilchrist," he said. "You seem more astonished than pleased at seeing me."

"I am amazed at seeing you," I replied. "I thought—the fact is, you will forgive me, Lidderdale, but I must speak plainly—I thought you were hiding from the police."

"I?—hiding from the police! I can scarcely take that, even from you, old friend. What do you mean?"

"Well, you left England four years ago in a precious hurry, and since you came back——"

"I tell you I have not been back many hours."

"Then," I continued, "what did the visiting-cards mean?"

"The visiting-cards?—you are talking in your sleep, Gilchrist. Wake up! What can you be driving at?"

I stared fixedly at him, then I sprang to my feet.

"God knows I am not dreaming," I said; "and yet to see you here, looking for all the world as if nothing had happened!"

"Nothing has happened, as far as I am concerned."

"Then why did you leave England as you did, and—and cut us all, and then come back——?"

"One question at a time, old man. I am prepared to account for my somewhat mysterious absence. The fact is, I was really mad at that time. You know what my feeling was for Alma Ramsay. When she definitely made up her mind to throw me over and marry that old *roué*, General Colthurst, I became seized with a frenzy which I could neither control nor subdue. In fact, a very demon got possession of me. You know I come of a good old family. Most of the men of my house have both wealth and position. I am the younger son of a younger son, and a few years ago was as poor as they make 'em. Alma refused me, I was convinced at the time, on the score of my poverty. I resolved to leave the country, to cut my connection with all my old belongings, and to make for South Africa. There I was joined by a man of the name of Colville. He and I had been chums together at college—he also knew Alma, and the first thing which drew us together was his mention of her name. He had a little money, and we agreed to purchase a share in a good diamond mine. We did well, better than well—in fact, I soon became very rich. Colville took fever and very nearly died. I nursed him, and on his supposed death-bed he made a confession. He also loved Alma Ramsay, and in order to win her for himself had gone to see her and told her lies about me—cursed lies, without a breath of truth in them—that I was secretly engaged to another, that I was false, and the rest—the poor girl believed him. He had no knowledge at the time that pressure was being brought to bear upon her to marry General Colthurst. When he discovered that his nefarious scheme had come to naught, and that he could not win her for himself, he resolved to join me in Africa. His object, he said, was to watch me in order to prevent my having the least communication with Alma, feeling sure that if he

only bided his time he would win her yet, as she was certain to survive old General Colthurst. He expressed penitence for what he had done on his supposed death-bed, and to my surprise, and his own, recovered. When he was well again I told him that it was absolutely necessary that he and I should dissolve partnership. He was furious at first, for he knew that by slow degrees I had come to possess far and away the larger share of the business. I was firm, however. I paid him a sum of money; he left me, telling me that his intention was to travel through Matabeleland, and cross the Zambesi into Congo Free State. I have not heard from him now for several months. I am a rich man; I heard suddenly that Alma was a widow—I have hurried back to England, and—why, what is the matter, Gilchrist? You look graver and graver. Do you believe that I am inventing this story?"

"I do not," I answered, "I believe you from my soul—but what has possessed you to come back to England *now*? Do you know that you have been wanted for the last week?"

"Wanted? By whom? By you, old friend?"

"No, not by me—I would rather you were buried in the depths of the sea. You don't know what awful thing has occurred—I can scarcely bear to tell you."

"Look here, Gilchrist," said Lidderdale, springing abruptly to his feet, "I have had a pretty rough life of it, all things considered. I am over thirty years of age, and can stand most things, but suspense I never could brook. You have evidently bad news for me—what is it?—out with it."

I stood silent for a minute. His grey eyes were fixed upon me with an intensity which drove out of my head all other thought beyond the terrible knowledge that he still loved that poor murdered woman with his whole soul and strength.

"I don't think anything you can say will greatly upset me," he said, "provided Alma is well. I am certain now that I had her affections from the first, and if she will promise to be mine I can give her every comfort. What of her, Gilchrist?"

"You can do nothing for her," I said—"she is dead."

"Dead—I might have guessed it—like my luck," he muttered.

He turned away in great agitation, and walked to the nearest window. He stood with his back to me for a minute or two. I saw him take out his handkerchief

and wipe the drops from his forehead. After a very short time he came back and seated himself near me.

"No wonder you were shy of telling me," he said. "That wretch, General Colthurst, no doubt shortened her days."

"Nay, do not blame him," I said. "General Colthurst may have been bad, but she survived him. She—Lidderdale, you must bear up, old man. I believe there is a solution of this terrible mystery—but mystery it is."

"Well, tell me, tell me. Surely there can be nothing worse. With her life mine practically ends—I have nothing more to live for. What did she die of?"

"Something too horrible almost to contemplate has happened," I said.

"Yes, I will tell you everything. Mrs. Colthurst has died—you have not asked how."

"How?" he asked. "Tell me. The fact of her death alone is sufficient for me. I shall never see her more. That is the crown of all misery to me."

"She has died by the hand of another," I continued; "and Lidderdale, God help you, you are suspected of her murder."

Lidderdale's reply to this was a loud, half-crazy laugh.

"You must be mad, old fellow," he said—but then he checked himself and looked at me.

"There is method in your madness," he continued; "you have more to say."

"If you can listen to me calmly I will tell you the entire story," I replied.

I then proceeded to give him a brief account of what had taken place. I told him of the visiting-cards with the handwriting on each which had already been identified with his. I told him of his supposed visit to Mrs. Colthurst on the night of the murder. He listened to me with outward calmness. When I had finished, he looked me steadily in the face.

"And now," he said, "in spite of this terrible circumstantial evidence against me, do you or do you not believe me guilty?"

I gave him a keen glance—then my heart

gave a leap in my breast. I replied with fervour:—

"As there is a God above I believe that you are as innocent of this crime as I am," I said.

He held out his hand, which I silently pressed.

"All the same," he said, "I can see at a glance that I am in a deuce of a mess. The fact is—I cannot help it—I suspect Colville."

"Colville?" I interrupted.

"Yes—the man who slandered me to her years ago—the man who loved her with a ferocity equal to the purity of my passion. You never happened to see him, did you, Gilchrist?"

"No."

"He is like me in appearance, remarkably so—about my height and complexion. Even to the colour of his eyes, we are as like as two peas. At Cambridge we used to be spoken of as the twins."

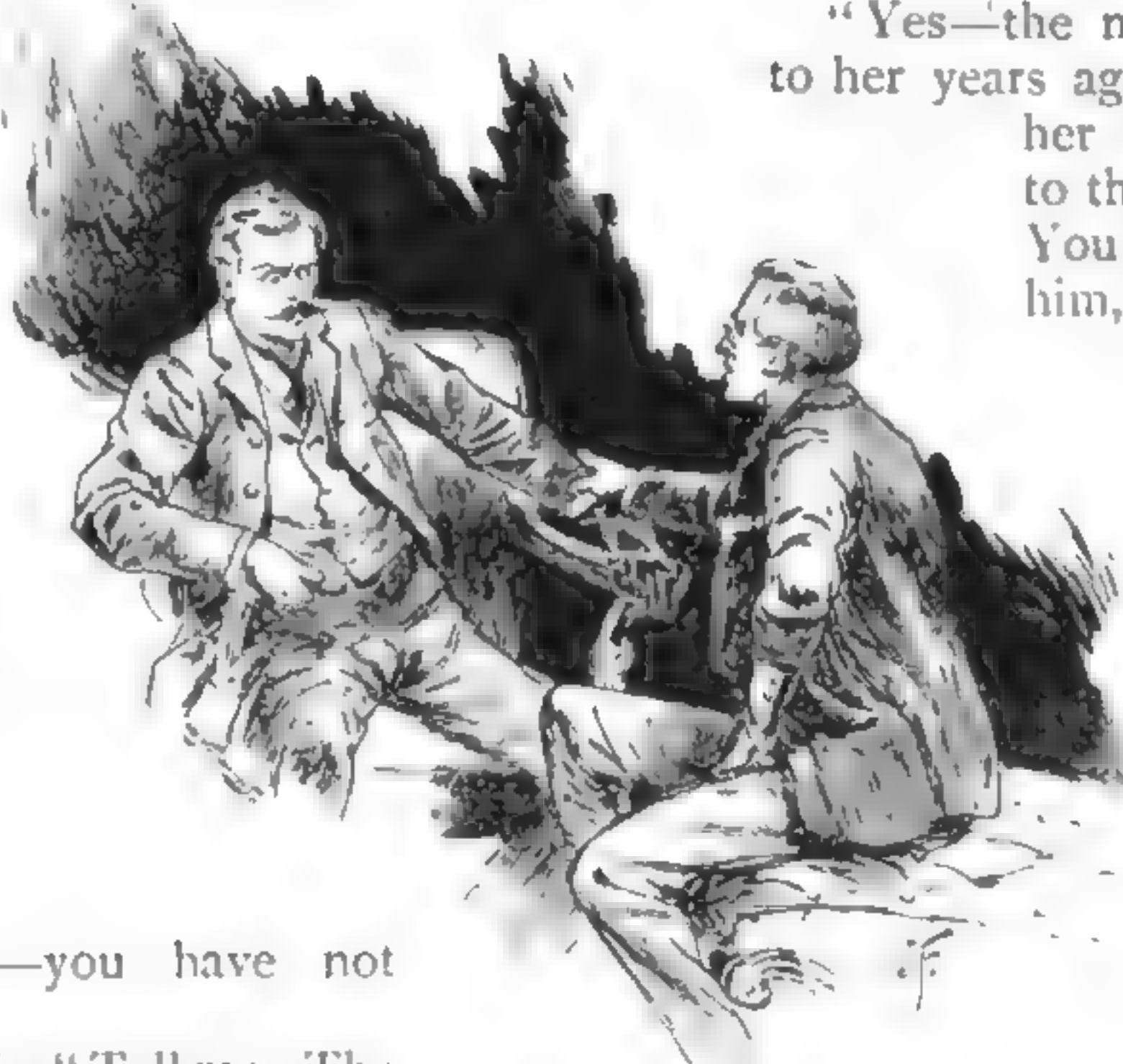
"But granted even that he did try to see her, what motive could he have in committing

such an awful crime?" I interrupted.

"Jealousy," replied Lidderdale, without hesitation. "The fact is, Alma would never look at him—he confessed as much as that on his supposed death-bed. When he spoke against me, she scorned him and showed him the door. She professed not to believe a word he said—but all the same, I suppose, a little of that mud stuck. He was like me, and he doubtless used my name in order to get an interview with her. I have watched him, and knew him well. He was capable in moments of frenzy of any deed of violence. Alma was the kind of woman to drive a man to distraction."

"The question now is," I continued, "how are we to prove your story? But that, of course, must be easy. You can be identified as one of the passengers on board the vessel which brought you from Africa to Marseilles?"

"There is a difficulty about that," replied Lidderdale, with a grim smile. "The fact is, I seem to have made a mess of things all round. Since I left the country I have



"I BELIEVE YOU ARE AS INNOCENT OF THE CRIME AS I AM."

always lived under another name. I did not want my old friends to write to me, nor my people to know anything about my whereabouts, and when I left England for Africa I took the name of John Ross. I wished to bury my old identity, and to hide myself from the face of the world. My shares in the diamond mines are in the name of John Ross. All legal documents are also made out in that name. I have a large sum of money waiting for me in the Bank of England, but I can only draw it in the name of John Ross. In short, fool that I am, I have surrounded myself with complications at every step."

I sat in a state of bewilderment for a moment, then I spoke.

"At least this much could be proved," I said. "You sailed on a certain date in a certain vessel from the coast of Africa to Marseilles—you were entered in the ship's books under the name of John Ross, the captain and passengers would know you again?"

"They might if they could be found, but the vessel was a small one and most of the passengers foreigners—it may take several weeks to get hold of the captain of the small trader in which I sailed."

"Then matters certainly look bad," I said. "What possessed you not to return to England in one of the ordinary liners?"

"The Evil One has been in this business from first to last," replied Lidderdale; "but the fact is, I am so stunned to-night that nothing whatever seems to matter. I must sleep over this, and let you know in the morning what steps I propose to take."

"You shall have a bed here; you had better not go back to your hotel."

He consented to this, and after a little more conversation we parted for the night.

In the morning Lidderdale met me with a brave face.

"I have put the thing straight, as far as my own action is concerned," he said. "Now that she has gone, I am more or less indifferent to life. Under any circumstances I cannot live under a cloud. I have made up my mind to go through the thing, and, whether I come out on the right side or wrong, at least to get it through. Gilchrist, will you come with me now to see the Superintendent of Police, in order that I may give him a faithful version of my story?"

This, after a little further conversation, we decided to do. We took a cab to Scotland Yard, saw the Superintendent, who, after a long conversation with Lidderdale, told him that it was his painful duty to arrest him on

the charge of the murder. My friend went off to await his examination before the magistrate with an air of outward quiet.

"I do not want to hang for it," he said to me, "for I am as innocent as you are; but short of that, now that she has gone, life is of no value to me."

I wrung his hand and hurried off, stricken to the heart.

For some reasons which I cannot now recall, Lidderdale's examination before the magistrate would not take place until the following morning, and in the meantime I felt that there was much to be done. More and more as the moments flew by did I feel convinced that he was right in his conjecture, and that Colville must be the guilty person. How he had managed his whole ingenious scheme was more than I could explain. After thinking matters over, I resolved to pay a visit to the house in Melville Street where the murder had been committed. I had been often there during the past week, and the servants knew me well. I had an interview with the footman, Carson, who happened to be the first to have seen his dead mistress. I said nothing to him about Lidderdale's appearance on the scene, but asked to be taken up to the drawing-room. The man immediately complied. He ran up before me, and the next moment we had entered the beautiful room.

The blinds were down, and there was a close smell caused by unopened windows. I saw at a glance that the room had been left almost undisturbed since the inquest. Carson went to draw up one of the blinds. When he did so, I saw a dark stain of blood on the carpet where the unhappy girl had fallen after she had received her death wound. Carson began talking eagerly. I scarcely listened to his story, which was stale by this time. In one corner of the room, put away on a table, I saw a couple of decanters—they were both half full, and contained either wine or cognac.

"What are those bottles doing there?" I asked.

Carson crossed the room to look at them.

"I never knew until this minute that they were left there," he replied. "I suppose one of the housemaids put them out of sight. They contain the brandy and sherry which were taken into the room the night the murder was committed. When Mrs. Colthurst saw Mr. Lidderdale's card on her return home she desired me to bring refreshments to the drawing-room, and I put the brandy and sherry and biscuits on a tray."

I lifted one of the decanters. It contained cognac—as I was putting it back again in its place I noticed, lying by its side, a broken wine-glass. Nearly half of the upper portion of the glass had been smashed away, but enough remained to allow a dark stain to show plainly in the bottom.

"What is this?" I said, lifting it up as I spoke.

Carson came and watched me with anxious eyes.

"I don't know, sir," he answered.

"It is a stain of blood," I said.

"There has been a deal of blood on many things in the room, sir," answered the man.



"'WHAT IS THIS?' I SAID."

I did not reply to him. In my own mind I was going rapidly through a chain of reasoning. From the appearance of the broken glass I did not think for a moment that the dark stain on this occasion was caused by the victim. In all probability the man who had committed the murder had rushed, after the horrible deed was done, to fortify himself with a glass of brandy. In his agitation he had doubtless broken the top of the glass, and perhaps cut himself in so doing—the blood had poured down inside, and now lay in a little pool in the bottom of the glass.

"I should like to take this broken glass away with me," I said to Carson.

"I never saw it before, sir," he said, "but I don't know—I am very sorry, I don't believe I ought to give you leave. All the contents of this room are under the care of the Superintendent of Police."

"Never mind," I replied, quickly — I suddenly remembered that I had some microscopical slides and a cover glass in my pocket. I took out the case, slipped a slide away from its fellows, and taking a smear from the stain in the bottom of the broken glass, put it on the slide. As soon as it had dried, which it did almost immediately, I put the slide back into the cover glass, and left the house. I went straight back to my flat, and immediately submitted the slide to the microscopical and chemical tests necessary for the thorough examination of the smear of blood. I had no sooner done so than an exclamation of astonishment and relief rose from my lips. This blood, dry as it was, contained a quantity of the remarkable parasite, *filaria perstans*. As this parasite has never been contracted anywhere except on the West Coast of Africa, this fact proved at a glance that it was not the blood of Mrs. Colthurst. It must therefore follow, as a natural consequence, that it could only come from a person who had been in West Africa.

As I eagerly studied the dark smear, I remembered a remark Lidderdale had made yesterday. He told me quite incidentally that, when Colville and he parted company, Colville had started to travel through Matabeleland, across the Zambesi, into the Congo Free State. It was, therefore, quite within the range of possibility that, on his way down the Congo while living among the natives, he might have contracted, unknown to himself, of course, the parasite, *filaria perstans*.

I had studied Eastern diseases with care, and was well acquainted with the peculiar nature of this strange parasite. Was it possible that I now held in my hand the means of clearing my friend?

After a few moments of careful reflection, I went straight to the house of a Harley Street doctor who was celebrated for his treatment of Eastern diseases. Dr. Materick and I had before now done good work together, and we were fast friends. He happened to be in, and could see me at once. I gave him a brief outline of my strange story, and showed him the stain on the microscopical slide. He looked at it carefully himself, and immediately corroborated the discovery I had made.

"There is not the least doubt," he said, "that only a person coming from the West Coast of Africa could contract this special parasite, as it is found nowhere else in the world."

"Then, of course," I cried in excitement, "this is of great importance to Lidderdale, who has never, to my knowledge, been in West Africa."

"Unquestionably," answered Materick, "the fact of the parasite being found in this stain of blood supports his story. Your friend has come, you tell me, straight from *South Africa*?"

"Yes, from South Africa."

"We can soon discover if he has the *filaria perstans* in his own blood; if not, the natural conclusion is that he could not be the man who committed the murder; but now, before we come to that, I have a somewhat remarkable thing to tell you. There is a patient at the present moment in my hospital suffering from a disease called the Sleeping Sickness, which is caused by *filaria perstans*, and which, therefore, can only be contracted in West Africa, although this particular symptom may not show itself until years after the person has been there. Still, the disease is a sufficiently peculiar one for a European to have. Would you like to come with me to see the patient?"

"I certainly should," I replied. "You know I am much interested in Eastern diseases."

"Well, I will call for you this afternoon, and drive you straight to my hospital."

This arrangement was carried out, and at four o'clock that day I found myself standing by the bedside of the patient who was suffering from the Sleeping Sickness.

"He will not recover," said Materick, in a low voice to me, as he looked at him. "The symptoms are all of an aggravated description. As a rule the disease lasts from three months to as many years, and is characterized by slowly increasing somnambulism and lethargy. These symptoms gradually deepen until the patient is almost continually asleep. I have known cases where the sick person becomes so lethargic that he cannot remain awake long enough to feed himself, but sometimes falls asleep in the act of carrying his food to his mouth. Now, the blood of this man simply swarms with the parasite, *filaria perstans*. I will remove a few drops of blood from one of the fingers, and you can test it when you go home."

While the doctor was speaking rapidly to

me in a low voice I was watching the patient. He was a slender, dark man, his face was bathed in perspiration, his black hair was pushed back from his forehead. Where had I seen those features before, that somewhat peculiar length of jaw, the shape of the low forehead? Suddenly I felt my heart beat hard.

"Look here, Materick," I cried, with excitement, "I believe Providence has brought me to this bedside. The man lying there has a look of Lidderdale. Good heavens! suppose he happens to be the person we are seeking for! Did you notice the colour of his eyes?"

"I cannot say that I did."

"In an ordinary case," I continued, "the eyes of such a man would be brown or black. If they should happen to be grey, I am convinced that your patient must be Colville, the man we are seeking for."

"Scarcely likely," said Materick, with a smile—he knew me of old, and had often spoken of my impetuosity in taking up clues which I supposed might help my friends out of difficulties.

"The more I look at him, the more my suspicion strengthens," I continued. "The life of one of my greatest friends hangs in the balance. I should like to become acquainted with the circumstances under which this man came to the hospital, and also with the permission of the hospital authorities, to watch the case."

"I believe both your wishes can be gratified," replied Materick. "Let us go to the Lady Superintendent: she may know something of the man's previous history."

We left the ward and went immediately into a small room off the main wing, where Sister Sophia came to interview us. When we mentioned the patient who was suffering from Sleeping Sickness, she told us immediately the little she knew. He had been found about a week ago in the street, to all appearance in a state of intoxication; had been taken by the police and removed to the nearest lock-up. There, a very brief examination showed that the man was not suffering from intoxication, but was seriously ill—he was conveyed to the hospital, and had scarcely opened his lips since. When taken up he was in evening dress. No one knew his name: he spent his entire time sleeping, although for the last day or so he had been suffering from tremor and spasms sometimes almost amounting to convulsions.

I asked the date of the man's reception

into the hospital: he had been brought there on the morning of the 22nd of June.

I looked at Materick.

"The murder took place on the night of the 21st," I said.

The doctor said a few more words to the Lady Superintendent, who immediately agreed to my request to be allowed to sit by the patient's bedside. I took up my place there.

"I will return to see you this evening, or if you leave the hospital you might call on me," said Materick. "Of course, if we can get this man to confess that his name is Colville, your friend ought to see him."

The doctor left the hospital, and I found myself practically alone with the patient.

The case was a bad one, likely to terminate fatally within a few hours at farthest. At my desire one of the nurses brought a screen to put round the sick man's bed. He lay muttering to himself, tossing from side to side. He could scarcely be aroused to take either food or medicine. Once he opened his eyes. He stared at me when he did so, and I saw their colour distinctly. They were grey, and very like my friend's in expression.

"Colville," I said, involuntarily, "do you know that Lidderdale has returned to England? He has just been arrested for the murder of Mrs. Colthurst. Now, you alone can explain that crime. Do not go to your Maker with that unconfessed sin upon your soul."

The sick man shivered when I spoke, and stared fixedly at me. With each word I uttered, his eyes grew more and more full of an incomprehensible expression—a mixture of terror and defiance.

"Why do you call me Colville?" he asked, at last.

"Because that is your name," I answered, firmly. "I am a friend of Lidderdale's. You have been guilty of a dastardly trick on your friend, and you have also committed——"

"Don't," he cried, giving way to an excess of terror. "As there is a God above, don't say the word."

"You cannot deny that your name is Colville?"

"Don't speak so loud—I am too ill to talk to you." He turned over, trembled violently, and the next moment was convulsed by spasm.

The nurse came to his assistance. When the fit had passed he sank into a deeper sleep than ever.

"I fear he will never speak again," she said, "but I have not had a case exactly like his before."

"How long is he likely to live?" I asked.

"He may lie in that condition for hours."

"Have I time to be absent for an hour or two?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"I will risk it," I replied. "The life of another hangs on that wretch's last moments of existence."

I left the hospital and drove to the police-court in Marlborough Street. There I had an interview with the Superintendent, and gave him a brief sketch of what had occurred.

"It is all-important," I said, "that Lidderdale should see this man. Will you bring him at once to Materick's Hospital?"

The Superintendent considered for a moment, and then resolved to comply.

"It is out of the routine," he said; "but I think I am justified."

He left me, returning in a moment with Lidderdale and another policeman. We all drove to the hospital, and were conducted to the ward—the screen was still round the dying man's bed. Lidderdale passed behind the screen, and we three stood without. I heard Lidderdale utter an exclamation—it



"DRINK THIS, AND THEN TELL ME THE TRUTH."

was enough—I knew that he had found his man.

“Rouse yourself, I am here,” he said, in a voice hoarse with emotion. The man started and muttered in his sleep. “Open your eyes,” continued Lidderdale. “Do you remember when you were ill last—do you remember what you confessed? Wake, Colville, wake up.”

The well-known tones burst through the terrible lethargy which was carrying the man to his grave—he opened his eyes. The police officers and I stepped a little nearer. The Superintendent took a notebook from his pocket and prepared to take down any confession which might be made.

“Am I dying?” asked the sick man.

“Yes.”

“Strange—so the inevitable has come at last,” he muttered. “I only feel dead with sleep, sleep which seems never inclined to terminate, sleep and a sort of tremor which comes over me.” He began to shake from head to foot.

The nurse came forward with a restorative; Lidderdale held it to the man’s lips.

“Drink this,” he said, “and then tell me the truth. Colville, why did you take her life?”

Colville looked at Lidderdale, and a strange smile flickered round his lips. His grey eyes, so like those of my friend, began to glitter.

“In a fit of frenzy,” he replied, after a pause. “She refused to have anything to do with me. Yes, I borrowed your name. Months ago I meant to do something of the kind, and I also managed, while with you in Africa, to secrete some of your visiting-cards. I had made careful copies of your handwriting, and knew I could imitate it sufficiently well to deceive anyone who was not a great expert. I knew she would see me if she thought I was you. She did so—but when she discovered the trick I had played on her, her scorn and rage were greater than I can describe. Then the Evil One entered into me, and I made up my mind that at

least you should not enjoy the prize which I could not obtain. I had a clasp-knife in my pocket; I opened it and, in a fit of fury, stabbed her to the heart. The moment I did the deed I repented. I ran to a decanter which contained brandy and poured out a glass—I was ill at the time—I had been queer for days and weeks. One of those awful tremors assailed me—the glass fell from my trembling hands and I cut myself. I filled up another and drained off the contents. The stimulant gave me strength to leave the house as quietly as if nothing had happened. Well, she has gone to her Maker.”

“Where you are following her—may God forgive you,” said the other man.

Making a tremendous effort, Colville suddenly sat up in bed.

“Is it true that I am dying?” he cried; his eyes grew full of terror. The two police officers pushed aside the screen and entered.

“Get him to sign this paper,” said the Superintendent, handing the one on which he had been hastily writing to Lidderdale.

“Put your name here, Colville,” said Lidderdale.

The man looked wildly around him—then took the pen in his hand.

“Sign your confession at once,” said the Superintendent.

Colville gave an awful laugh.

“Your law cannot have me now,” he said, looking at the Superintendent; “you are too late for that—so I don’t mind signing.” He scribbled his name feebly at the bottom of the sheet of paper. “She is lost to us both, Lidderdale,” he continued, “that is my only comfort.”

This was his final remark. He sank back on his pillows in another fit, in which he died.

Of course, the case against Lidderdale fell through. He left England almost immediately afterwards.

“I have nothing to live for,” he said to me on the day that I saw him off.

But he is young, and Time, the healer, may cause him to think differently yet.

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveller. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

V.—AT THE STEPS OF THE ALTAR.



HERE were few cleverer surgeons in London than my friend, Edward Wesseley, and when I called at his house in Harley Street on a certain morning early in the March of last year, I scarcely expected to be able to secure the five minutes of his attention which were essential to my purpose. I was anxious to consult him with regard to a certain point on brain paralysis, about which I was then making some interesting investigations. A word from his vast store of experience would set a small difficulty straight, and I scribbled a message to that effect on my card. The servant quickly reappeared, asking me to come immediately into his master's presence. I entered Wesseley's consulting-room—he came forward with his accustomed eagerness to greet me.

"No apologies, my dear Gilchrist," he cried. "It so happens that you have come in the very nick of time. I am just about to operate on a patient who is awaiting me in my home for cases next door. His illness has arisen from the following cause: He received a bad fall on the left side of the head when playing polo about a month ago. Since then he has been paralyzed in the right arm and leg, with anæsthesia in the leg almost complete, and hyperæsthesia in the arm. I have not the slightest doubt that paralysis is due to pressure on the angular gyrus of the left side of the brain, and am about to trephine immediately. My operation will explain away your difficulties better than any amount of discussion; and if you care to lend me a hand I shall be only too pleased to have your suggestions, and, if necessary, your help."

"Of course I shall be delighted," I answered.

I accompanied Wesseley next door, and

we waited for a moment or two in a room next the one in which the operation was to take place.

"I will not call you in until the patient is unconscious," he said. "I am only waiting now until Rivington, the anæsthetist, has arrived."

Wesseley had scarcely said the latter words before the door was fung open, and a slender, young-looking man was ushered into the room—he had a thin, dark face, and deeply-set eyes with a somewhat nervous expression. Wesseley introduced him to me as Dr. Rivington, and the two men immediately withdrew into the adjoining apartment. The door between the two rooms was slightly ajar, and I could hear their voices murmuring



"WESSELEY INTRODUCED HIM TO ME AS DR. RIVINGTON."

in consultation. I could also get a glimpse of the figure of a tall man lying on a sofa. A nurse, in a conventional dress, was flitting backwards and forwards. The doctors continued to consult together in a distant part of the room; the patient lay motionless. I was just beginning to wonder why the man was not put under the influence of the anæsthetic, when Wesseley hurriedly re-entered the room where I was sitting, shutting the door behind him.

"What is to be done?" he said, in a voice which betrayed some slight irritation. "Rivington is behaving in the most extraordinary manner—he absolutely refuses to administer the anæsthetic."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. He is one of the best anæsthetists in London, and I never saw him hesitate before. He came into the room behind the patient, gave him a glance, changed colour quite perceptibly, and motioned to me to accompany him to the other end of the room. He then explained in a whisper that Colonel Normanton happens to be an acquaintance of his own, that he has a strong personal dislike to him, that he considers him to be a bad subject for anæsthetics, and that, under the circumstances, nothing will induce him to administer the chloroform. I had no time to over-ride his ridiculous scruples, for I am due at another operation within an hour; he was obstinate as a mule, and has just left the house. The unfortunate Colonel is wondering at the unaccountable delay."

"Can I not help you?" I asked. "You remember that I was anæsthetist at my hospital for the last year of my residence. I think I can manage the case, if you are inclined to trust me."

"Capital, Gilchrist," cried Wesseley, relief and delight now beaming over his countenance. "Once again I repeat that you have come in the very nick of time. Will you come with me into the next room?"

I willingly complied, and entered the operating-room with the surgeon.

The patient was still lying perfectly quiet, with a drawn, anxious expression very perceptible on his face. The nature of the operation about to be performed was of the deepest interest to me, but the matter I had in hand was to produce unconsciousness, and when I had got Colonel Normanton into that condition, to watch him with the most undeviating attention.

He was a large, heavily built, somewhat florid man, and I was not surprised that he took some time to get thoroughly under the influence of the anæsthetic. At last, however, the moment arrived when Wesseley could begin to perform the very delicate operation on the side of the head, which was to save the patient's life. A small portion of the skull was removed by the trephine, with that skill and rapidity for which the great surgeon was famous—the usual *toilette* was then completed, and the operation was

over. During that time I scarcely felt myself at liberty to remove my eyes from the patient's face—he had taken the anæsthetic with difficulty, and I now perceived by a blue tinge over his face and the coldness of his extremities that he was in extreme danger of collapse.

"We must get him out of his unconscious state as quickly as possible," I said, turning to Wesseley; "Rivington was right, he is a bad subject for anæsthetics."

The surgeon and I instantly began to use the usual restoratives, artificial respiration, injections of ether, nitrite of amyl, and the rest; and, in order to expedite matters, we opened the flannel shirt which the patient was wearing, and exposed his chest to full view.

Momentous as the present occasion was, when we did this I could not but give a perceptible start: in the neighbourhood of the man's left breast was a large violet patch nearly the size of the palm of the hand; it was red near the edges, and looked inclined to ulcerate. Before I had time to utter a word or to draw Wesseley's attention to it, the patient uttered a sigh and opened his eyes; I hastily fastened his shirt, and Wesseley began to talk to him in an encouraging tone. After a very short period he was sufficiently recovered to be removed to his bed in the adjoining room. Wesseley had to hurry off to his next operation, and I returned to continue the experiments which I was making in my laboratory. The clue I required was now in my hands, and I hoped to produce results of some importance. I was scarcely likely to see Colonel Normanton again—he had unconsciously rendered me a service; and I had, by the merest chance, made a discovery with regard to him which I was scarcely likely to forget.

In my travels over the world I have visited China and other Eastern places, and have therefore had opportunities of going into the subject of the special and terrible disease with which the unfortunate Colonel was infected—how he had contracted it, whether he knew himself of the sure but awful fate which awaited him, whether Wesseley had after all done well to rescue him from a less terrible death, were questions which I could not help asking myself from time to time. From the little I had seen of the patient, he looked like a man who had lived hard and fast—his record was doubtless not the best in the world. Rivington, the well-known anæsthetist, must have had reasons for his extraordinary refusal to administer the anæsthetic.

In the rush of other work and other interests, however, the memory of Normanton began gradually to fade from my mental horizon, and I might, doubtless, have forgotten him altogether had not the following events taken place.

On a certain afternoon in the month of June of the same year I entered a friend's drawing-room just before dinner, and saw Normanton standing by an open window. I recognised him immediately, and as my eyes met his I saw him glance in my direction. He looked now in all respects a different person from the helpless patient whom I had seen a couple of months ago. He was a strikingly handsome man, of between forty and fifty years of age, very tall and broad in proportion—he carried himself like a soldier, and had the suave manner of a man of the world. I had scarcely entered the room when I saw his restless eyes look past me in the direction of the door: a slender, dark-eyed girl of about twenty years of age had come in. She was dressed very simply, in white, and gave an instant impression of great purity and innocence. Our hostess and host came up to speak to her, and then Colonel Normanton advanced to her side; he and she withdrew into the window together, and the next mo-



"HE AND SHE WITHDREW INTO THE WINDOW TOGETHER."

ment dinner was announced. There was something about this girl's face which attracted me, and I had a sort of undefinable feeling that I had seen her before. At dinner, I asked my next-door neighbour her name.

"Oh, she is so charming," was the instant reply; "do you not know her? She is the famous Miss Rivington, the artist—her picture made quite an impression in this year's Academy; she is scarcely twenty yet,

and everyone is talking about her; they say she is engaged to that very handsome Colonel Normanton, with whom we are all more or less in love—you see, he is talking to her now. Don't you admire him immensely?"

I glanced across the dinner-table—Colonel Normanton was saying something to the young girl by his side; she looked up at him in a shy, sweet manner, then the long lashes fell over her pale but beautifully moulded cheeks.

"There is no doubt whatever of the engagement," said the lady whom I had taken in to dinner, "and, for my part," she added, "I am very glad of it, for Hilda really requires someone to look after her."

"I fancy that I once saw her brother," I replied. "Is not he Dr. Rivington, the famous anæsthetist?"

"Yes, yes, of course—and, oh, Mr. Gilchrist, there is quite a romantic story about the pair—they were left orphans at a very early age and grew up together, quite devoted, you know. Hilda insisted on making a home for him while he was walking the hospitals; he, on his part,

watched her through her art career. Then, all of a sudden, she was left a lot of money, something between two and three thousand a year. He refused to

touch a penny of it, and, report says, they are not quite so friendly now. I have even heard it whispered that he does not approve of her engagement; but surely nothing could be more suitable. Colonel Normanton belongs to a crack regiment, and is a man of very good family; his being a little older than his bride is too ridiculous a reason for objecting to the match."

I muttered something very like an oath

under my breath. In any case such a union would be a desecration; with the knowledge which I possessed of the unfortunate Colonel it would be too horrible to contemplate.

Mrs. Singleton told me some more particulars with regard to Hilda Rivington—she was a philanthropist—she was daring to a degree, not a scrap conventional—utterly fearless, and with a latent obstinacy in her character which caused her on every occasion to carry out her own will, with special tenacity, when once her mind was fully made up.

"I see by your face, Mr. Gilchrist, that you do not approve of the match," said my neighbour at last; "but don't imagine now that you can do anything to make or mar in the matter. Hilda might have been induced to give Colonel Normanton up had Arthur, her brother, not been so set against the union. That fact put her on her mettle, and it is useless to deny that she is desperately in love with the Colonel. For my part, I don't think she could do better."

"As a fact, I believe that discrepancy of age is a mistake in marriage," I answered.

Just then the signal was given for the ladies to retire; soon afterwards we joined them in the drawing-room, where I was intro-

duced to Miss Rivington. She was standing under a tall lamp, which was shaded with rose-coloured silk. Whether the reflection caused by the light or the approach of her lover made the colour to flame into the girl's cheeks, I do not know, but her beauty became more apparent than ever, and I knew that the torch had been already applied which would set a strong but passionate nature on fire.

She motioned me to a seat near her side, and began to talk in a cultivated and intelligent way on many subjects. There was a dash and go about her least word which attracted me much: the sensitive curves of her beautiful lips, the flashing gleams from her teeth, which were as regular and even as a row of pearls; the sympathetic and varying expression which came and went in her full, deep eyes, told me that I was talking to a girl of no ordinary capacity and depth of soul.

"And yet she is going to throw herself away, with her youth, her beauty, her talent," I could not help muttering. "Such a marriage ought never to be contemplated. Yes, I can see that she is in love with Colonel Normanton, and I am a total stranger—it is also true that I have got possession of his more than ghastly secret through an accident, but I very much doubt whether I ought to allow this marriage to proceed."

"Colonel Normanton tells me that you were instrumental in saving his life not very long ago," she said.

"He lays too much stress upon the circumstance," I replied. "I happened to be with Wesseley when he was about to operate on the Colonel for a somewhat serious accident."

"Yes, yes, I know all about it," she continued; "and my brother refused to give the anæsthetic"—her



"WE JOINED THEM IN THE DRAWING-ROOM."

voice underwent a complete change as she uttered the last words. "You met Arthur on that occasion," she continued. "Was that the first time you made his acquaintance?"

"I had heard of your brother, of course, but I had never had the pleasure of meeting him before," I replied.

"I wish he were your friend," she continued, with great earnestness—"I wish he would confide in you, and"—she lowered her voice until it sank almost to a whisper—"I have heard of you before," she said; "you like to do kindnesses for people who are in difficulties. Now, at the present moment, I am in a serious one—I love Colonel Normanton; I respect him more than any other living man—in less than two months' time I hope to be his wife; and yet"—she paused—"he is coming," she said, "and I must be quick. Arthur will not write to me nor see me. He is angry because—because I give myself to the man whom I love. Once Arthur and I had all our thoughts, all our hopes, our loves in common. The idea of this estrangement makes me miserable, notwithstanding that I have the best of all causes for bliss."

"Can I do anything for you?" I asked.

"If you would, you could help me. Would you go and see Arthur?—oh, I know it is too much to ask, but——"

"Give me a message to your brother, and I will take it, with pleasure," I answered.

"That is just it—I cannot give you a direct message"; she rose abruptly as she spoke—Colonel Normanton had almost reached her side.

"I leave it to your judgment," she said, turning round abruptly and facing me—then she held out one of her long, delicate, artistic hands. I clasped it for an instant.

"You are the friend of some friends of mine," she said; "you have had more difficult tasks than this to execute before now." She smiled at me and turned aside. The next instant she was bidding her hostess good-night, and a moment later she and Colonel Normanton had left the room.

When I returned to my flat I sat for some time absorbed in anxious reflection. Miss Rivington had given me a difficult task to execute. She and I were total strangers, and yet she had asked me to interfere in her affairs. She wished me to effect a reconciliation between her brother and herself. This I might accomplish, but not in the way she thought. From time to time I have called myself a bit of a fool for meddling so much in the business of other people; nevertheless,

when the next occasion arises, I always rush into the fray with the same absorbing interest. The thought of this girl, and the really awful fate which awaited her, truly appalled me. I felt now that even if she had not asked me to interfere I must have done so—I must have taken some step to try and save her from herself.

I went to bed in the small hours, and called the following morning early at Rivington's house in Queen Anne Street. I sent in my card, and was admitted at once into his presence. He was a man of extraordinary nervous force and power; very young, not only in appearance but in fact, to have obtained the high position which he had now secured. He came forward to meet me, and shook hands with cordiality.

"I do not apologize for this intrusion," I said; "I met your sister last night at General Sommers's house, in Curzon Street."

When I mentioned his sister's name, Rivington's face underwent a change, not in colour, but in expression—it grew hard and firm, the eyes suddenly appeared sullen. His manner now to me was distinctly distant, not to say cold.

"Sit down, Mr. Gilchrist, pray," he said. "Has my—has Miss Rivington commissioned you to bring me a message?"

"Not exactly," I said. I favoured him with a long glance, and then all of a sudden I resolved to throw prudence to the winds.

"Good heavens! Rivington," I cried, "if you and I are to save that girl from a fate about the most appalling in the world, we must each throw aside our masks, and talk together as man to man."

He stared at me for an instant in astonishment too great for words, then his eyes seemed to lighten—emotion trembled on his fine lips; he sprang up and approached me.

"Your name has not been unknown to me in the past," he said. "I believe you are a good fellow. If you will help me now, you will lift a load which is crushing me to the earth. But what do you mean? You talk strangely."

"You must give me your full confidence before I give you mine," I answered. "Your sister is engaged to Colonel Normanton—you dislike the engagement to such an extent that you have left your only sister, a young girl, a beautiful one, without your protection, at the most critical moment of her life. You dislike Colonel Normanton personally, to such an extreme degree, that you refused, at a critical moment in his life, to use your medical skill for his benefit. What are your reasons?"

"You are an extraordinary man to ask me, but I will tell you," replied Rivington; "and I will reply to your last question first. I refused to administer the anæsthetic because I hate Normanton as I never thought to hate human being, because I dared not, under the circumstances, give the anæsthetic. Do not ask me further."

"I must," I retorted. "You have yet to reply to my first question—why do you desert your only sister at this crisis?"

"Good heavens! Gilchrist, you are forcing my confidence to an extraordinary degree. Why do I desert Hilda? I think of her morning, noon, and night; but I have no control over her. You cannot even imagine what she has been to me, what I have been to her. We were both poor, and we struggled. God only knows how we struggled, and how we worked. In those days we knew what real happiness meant; we both tasted the sweets of success, and all went well until a cursed fool thought to interfere by leaving Hilda money. She is rich; an heiress, in fact. She made the acquaintance of Colonel Normanton—he is a very demon with women—and he soon contrived to win her affections. At first I tolerated him, disliking the man, mind you, all the time instinctively; but when Hilda told me of her preference I began to make inquiries, and, oh, heavens! the revelations which were disclosed to me. It is enough to state to you that the man is bad through and through. I told Hilda everything. I went metaphorically on my knees to her—she would not listen to a word, she would believe nothing—in short, she is infatuated. There was a time when I was certain that she loved me; but I am now forced to believe that her affection for me has utterly ceased to exist—she is a different woman. She is completely her own mistress. Normanton wants her for her money; he is deeply in debt, and believes that her fortune will resuscitate his affairs. Hilda is placed in the extraordinary position of being absolutely able to do what she likes with her money. She has no nearer relation than myself, and as she is just of age I am powerless to interfere. She has chosen between us—she cares nothing more

for me—I wish to forget her, I struggle to forget her. Why did you come this morning to torment me without cause?"

"You make at least one vast mistake," I interrupted, when I could stay the torrent of words which seemed wrung from the poor fellow by an emotion which he could not restrain. "Your sister is in love. In that extraordinary condition people are, in my opinion, not quite sane. I mean, of course, on the one point. But she still cares for you, Rivington; listen, I will convince you of this." I then related briefly the interview which had taken place between us on the previous evening.

I think I told my story well, for Rivington, who had been staring fixedly at me, suddenly sprang to his feet and walked to the window,



"RIVINGTON SUDDENLY SPRANG TO HIS FEET."

doubtless to conceal feelings which were too strong for him. He came back after a moment and stood facing me.

"If you see her again you can repeat to her what I have already said," he began. "She has chosen between us; she knows my mind. I can, when occasion offers, be as obstinate as herself. If she insists on marrying that scoundrel, I will never look at her face again. Beautiful and clever as she is, she cannot have everything. She wants us both. She shall not have us. One or other—yes, one or other—but, before God, not both. Gilchrist, I could not breathe the same air as that wretch."

He grew so excited now that he could not contain himself, and began to pace rapidly up and down the room. Suddenly he stopped and faced me.

"I cannot understand why I am placing so much confidence in you," he said, "but I think I have answered your questions to the best of my ability. It is now your turn to speak to me. Why did you use the words you did when you entered the room? Why did you speak of an awful fate hanging over my sister? Do you know a still blacker side to that man's character?"

"I know nothing whatever about Colonel Normanton's character," I replied; "but, all the same, I know something about him which, in my opinion, will raise an insuperable obstacle to the marriage."

Rivington turned white to his lips and stared fixedly at me, then he spoke abruptly.

"You mean that the scoundrel is already married?" he said.

"He may or may not be, but his past has nothing to do with me," I replied. "I discovered what you might have discovered had you controlled yourself sufficiently to administer the anæsthetic." I rose as I spoke, and whispered a word in Rivington's ear. He started back as if I had shot him.

"No! Impossible! You must be wrong," he said.

"I am right; I cannot make a mistake. I have studied the disease in the East—there is not the faintest shadow of doubt."

"But surely such a thing could not happen to an Englishman?"

"In this case there is no doubt."

"And Hilda knows nothing, my innocent, beautiful girl!"

"She knows nothing whatever."

"Gilchrist, does the man know it himself?"

"That I cannot tell you, Rivington. I only repeat that, bad as the man is morally, his state of health absolutely precludes marriage. Your sister must break off her engagement, and at once."

Rivington flung himself into a chair and covered his face with his hands. After a moment or two he looked up.

"I am not myself just now," he said; "with your permission I will call to see you this evening, then we can discuss what is best to be done."

I rose at the hint.

"Don't forget," I said, "that from what you have told me of the man, and from what I myself gather, he is capable of almost anything to win his purpose. He wants your sister's money, and will marry her in spite of everything if we are not too quick for him."

"I know, I know," he answered. "I will come to see you to-night, without fail."

Rivington shook hands with me, and I left the house.

During all that long day's work my thoughts were much occupied with the brother and sister. I found myself as deeply interested in the man as the girl. Providence, without doubt, was guiding this affair, and even at the risk of a broken heart Hilda Rivington must be saved from the scoundrel who meant to ruin her, body and soul.

Rivington had arranged to call at my rooms at seven in the evening. He would doubtless be punctual, and I waited somewhat impatiently for him; but seven o'clock, eight o'clock, nine o'clock went by, and he had not put in an appearance. I grew restless at last, and resolved to call at his house. I ran up the steps and rang the bell. The servant opened the door, and I immediately inquired for his master.

"Have you not heard, sir?" he asked.

"No—what? Has anything happened?"

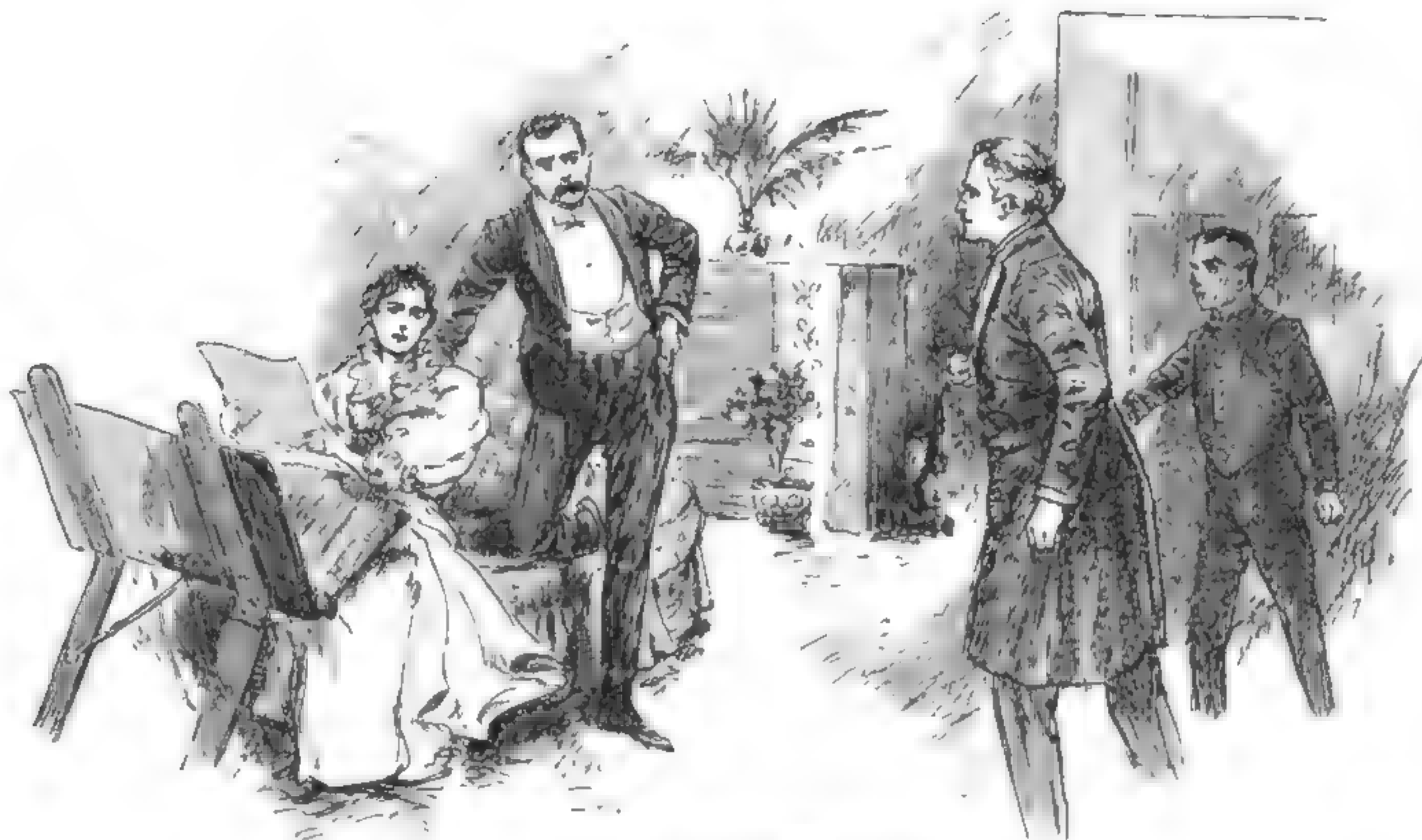
"It is bad news, sir; we are all in great trouble. Mr. Rivington has had a serious carriage accident, and was taken straight to St. George's Hospital. He is very ill indeed, and quite unconscious, and no one is allowed to see him except the nurses and the doctors who are attending him."

"Do you happen to know," I asked, "if his sister, Miss Rivington, is aware of the occurrence?"

"I cannot tell you, sir," was the answer.

I turned and went down the steps. I resolved to call at St. George's Hospital in the morning, but in the meantime something must be done. It was quite possible that, owing to the absolute break between the brother and sister, Miss Rivington might not know of the terrible calamity which really hung over her. I went to General Sommers's house in Curzon Street, saw Mrs. Sommers, who happened to be at home, told her briefly what had happened, and asked for Miss Rivington's address.

Hailing the first hansom I came across, I then drove straight to Fortescue Mansions. Miss Rivington was in, and I was admitted at once into her presence. The rooms which she occupied were handsome and furnished artistically. A smart page flung open the drawing-room door and announced my name. Hilda was seated on a sofa, and Colonel Normanton was standing by her side. An elderly lady, who evidently acted as a sort of companion, left the room by another door as I entered. I could not but perceive that Colonel Normanton's face flushed with some annoyance when he saw



"I WENT UP TO MISS RIVINGTON."

me. I nodded to him, and then went up to Miss Rivington.

"Can I see you alone for a moment?" I asked.

She glanced up at her lover.

"I think not," she said, with a smile—"for George and I have no secrets"; she gave him another look, then her dark eyes, deep as wells, confronted me frankly.

"I guess what you have come to say," she said. "You have fulfilled my commission—thank you in advance. Have you news for me, pleasant news?"

"I have disastrous news for you," I said. I spoke abruptly, for at that moment I had no pity for her; she changed colour, but still looked at me steadily.

"You have failed?" she said, and I detected, with pleasure, a tremor in her voice. "Then you and I, George," she cried, looking back at her lover, "must be all in all to each other, for Arthur will not relent. He will not have us both, and I will not give you up for him. Let it be so, then."

She began to hum a gay air under her breath, and approached an open piano.

"Stay for a moment: you quite misunderstand me," I said. "I may have something further to tell you presently with regard to my interview with Rivington this morning—but you have not heard of the accident which has happened to him?"

"What?" she cried, pausing and turning her head.

"He has had a bad carriage accident, and is lying insensible at St. George's Hospital."

She stood quite silent for a moment, her tall figure swaying faintly; then she clutched at a chair to steady herself.

"A bad accident?" she said. "Then I will go to him immediately."

"No, no, Hilda," interrupted Colonel Normanton; "you must think of your own health, and——"

"Folly!" she replied—then she smiled at him. "Forgive me, George," she said, "I don't quite know what I am saying. Please repeat your news again, Mr. Gilchrist—a *bad* accident?"

"A bad carriage accident; but I really cannot tell you all particulars—Mr. Rivington must have fallen on his head, for he is unconscious—he was taken to St. George's Hospital, and his servant tells me that no one is to see him except the nurses and the doctors."

"And his only sister," she continued. "Thank you, thank you; yes, I will go to him at once—nothing can keep me from his side—I am greatly obliged to you." She turned to leave the room, not even glancing at Colonel Normanton.

The Colonel walked as far as the door, then seemed to hesitate, and turning, came up to where I was standing.

"I must demand some explanation of this interference," he said; "will you come with me to my club?"

I left the house with him without replying—he hailed a hansom, and we both got in; in a few moments we found ourselves in his club in St. James's Street. He led me at

once into an empty room, rang the bell, ordered some refreshments, and then stood on the hearthrug facing me.

"Now," he said, "you have something to explain, pray do it in as few words as possible. Until last evening you did not even know Miss Rivington by name. By what right do you interfere in her private affairs?"

"By the right she herself gave me, and by the common right of humanity," I replied, standing up in my turn. "Colonel Normanton, I hesitated to come to you, but you yourself have now forced the situation. I will speak frankly. Have you any right to marry that innocent girl?"

He raised his brows in well-acted surprise.

"As much right as any other man," he said, with fierceness; "the girl loves me—she wishes to be my wife."

"It is quite impossible that you can love her back again."

"What in the world do you mean?"

"I will explain myself presently. I have heard reports, and they are doubtless true, that you are marrying Miss Rivington for her money."

"Beware, what you are saying, sir; you may go a step too far."

"Colonel Normanton, I must speak out," I answered. "I began to interfere in this affair with unwillingness, but that moment has long passed. I saw Miss Rivington's brother this morning, and but for an unforeseen accident the matter would now be in his hands. As it is, I take it up for him. Is it possible that you are in ignorance of your own condition? Do you not know that there is a fate hanging over you which ought to preclude all thought of marriage?"

In spite of his self-control, he changed colour and shuffled from one foot to the other uneasily.

"Explain yourself," he said, in a voice of ice.

"I mean to do so. When you were under the influence of the anæsthetic I discovered that you are the victim of a very terrible disease, which seldom or never attacks Englishmen—that fact alone precludes your marriage." I bent forward as I spoke and whispered two words in his ear.

He dropped on to the nearest chair—took out a handkerchief and wiped the moisture from his brow.

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"I have known it," he said, after a pause. "God knows the insupportable, hideous thing could not be a secret from its unhappy victim; but I, at least, thought that the secret was all my own, that no one on earth shared it with me. You have got possession of this skeleton in my life through an accident: do you or do you not mean to use it against me?"

"I have already told Miss Rivington's brother. Unless you immediately acquaint her with the truth I must do so."

"Then let me tell you, sir"—Normanton now rose from his chair, white with passion—"let me tell you that you are acting the part of a scoundrel. You won this secret from



"YOU ARE ACTING THE PART OF A SCOUNDREL."

me under a professional disguise. By all that is holy you are bound to respect it."

"There are exceptions to every rule," I replied, "and in this case I do not feel that I am bound. You are about to do a dastardly thing, and as Rivington is too ill to take up the cudgels in his sister's behalf, I feel that it is my duty to take his place."

The Colonel swore a round oath and began to pace up and down before the fire.

"Break off your engagement to Miss Rivington under any plea you care to employ," I continued, "and the secret I have just whispered to you shall never again pass my lips."

"Do you mean what you say?" he asked.

"I do."

"Then give me until to-morrow morning to think matters over. You shall have my answer then. This is my private address." He took out his visiting-card and put it in my hand.

I promised to call upon him, and soon afterwards left the club.

The next morning, at an early hour, I went to St. George's Hospital. The news with regard to Rivington was the reverse of reassuring; he was still quite unconscious, and the doctors entertained serious fears of his ultimate recovery. Miss Rivington had spent the greater part of the night with her brother, but was not just then at St. George's Hospital. As there was nothing further that I could do, I got into a hansom and drove to Colonel Normanton's flat in Bayswater. There I was met with the surprising intelligence that the Colonel had left London the evening before, and had told the hall porter to forward all letters to his club, leaving no other address.

Wondering what this could possibly mean, I went back to my own house. In the course of the afternoon I called to see Miss Rivington at Fortescue Mansions. The young lady herself was absent, but her companion, Miss Curtice, told me that Miss Rivington was with her brother at the hospital, that she was in very great and genuine distress, and that as far as she could tell had had no news whatever from Colonel Normanton. For a brief moment I wondered if the man really meant to quit London, and to give Miss Rivington up in the most effectual way by deserting her. As this, however, would be quite foreign to his probable character, I resolved to watch matters closely.

In about a week's time, although Rivington was not pronounced out of danger, Miss Rivington, greatly to my surprise, ceased to visit the hospital. I called one day at Fortescue Mansions, and heard that she, with her companion, had also left London. My uneasiness now grew greater—I felt convinced that Colonel Normanton was not acting straight, and that Miss Rivington ought to be watched. The Colonel's object would be, if report told true, to hurry on the marriage on any pretext, after which he could snap his fingers at us all.

Feeling anxious and uneasy, I called one day at the hospital, and had my first interview with Rivington—he was quite conscious, but was only allowed to speak a few words. The moment he saw me he motioned me to draw near.

"You are the man I want," he said, in a low whisper, and with the ghost of a smile; "your image has been stamped on my brain all through my delirium. Now that you are here, will you take an oath?"

"What about?" I asked.

"I am too weak, and my faculties too scattered," he continued, "to say many words, but a promise from your lips will content me."

"Rest assured that I will do anything for you, my dear fellow," I replied. "You allude, of course, to your sister and Colonel Normanton?"

"Yes, yes," he nodded, and his face grew more ghastly.

"You must not agitate the patient, sir," said the nurse, coming forward.

"Leave us for a moment, nurse," said the sick man. "Stoop lower, Gilchrist. I want you to take an oath to me that you will stop that marriage."

"You authorize me to act for you, then?" I said.

"I do, I do—I put you in my place. Satisfy me with your promise, your oath."

"Rest assured that I will do my utmost, Rivington—I swear it before Heaven."

He sighed and closed his eyes contentedly, and a moment later the nurse hurried me from the ward.

My duty now was plain, and I owed to a certain sense of relief. That day I visited a well-known private detective, and instructed him to shadow Normanton forthwith. I now spent most of my time in Bloomsbury, anxiously awaiting the result. The detective sent me reports from day to day, but a week and then a fortnight went by, and I had no tidings whatever of either Normanton or Miss Rivington.

Meanwhile, Rivington's condition remained extremely precarious, and as my visits had always the effect of exciting him, the nurse at last forbade me to see him.

One evening, three weeks after the accident, I found, on returning home, a telegram. It was from Deacon, the detective, and ran as follows:—

"Polworthy, Cornwall.—Have discovered my man; come down by next train if you wish to stop wedding.—J. DEACON."

I hunted up time-tables, and found that I could just catch the night mail from Waterloo. I wired to the detective to tell him I was coming, and by a close shave secured the train to the West of England. To my dismay, however, I also discovered that Polworthy was off the main line, and that I must leave the train at St. Ives, and take a small local train for this out-of-the-way part of the country.

At seven o'clock on the following morning, I arrived at the large junction where I was

to part company with the express. On making inquiries, I was told that Polworthy was twenty-five miles away, and the unpleasant news was also conveyed to me that the train to this secluded hamlet would not be due for an hour and a half. Could I have obtained horses I would have driven the remainder of the distance at any risk. I thought the time would never pass, and became restless and excited to an extraordinary degree. Presently, however, the local train crawled in. I took my seat and endeavoured to hope for the best. My principal fear was that Normanton, in his anxiety to secure his bride, would have the marriage solemnized at an early hour. Even now I might be too late. To add to my perplexities the train broke down just outside a tunnel, within a few miles of the little Cornish town. This last mishap was more than I could stand, and, leaving the carriage, I resolved to walk the remainder of the distance. Fortunately a carter, in a smock-frock, who was driving a waggon-load of hay, saw me and offered me a lift, and in this fashion I got over the remaining miles.



"IN THIS FASHION I GOT OVER THE REMAINING MILES."

Knowing that Deacon would be sure to meet me at the railway-station I went straight there, and was relieved to see him standing on the platform. He gave a start of surprise and pleasure when I touched him on the arm.

"I did not wait for the train," I said; "there was a slight accident just outside Rundle tunnel. Now, what is up? Tell me quickly."

"You are barely in time, if that, sir," replied the man. "And now that you have come down I do not quite know what you will be able to do. I had a pretty hunt after that Colonel, but I found him at last. Talk of scoundrels! But I had best give you the history later on."

"Yes," I said, impatiently. "Is Miss Rivington here?"

"She is in the neighbourhood, staying with a lady of the name of Curtice."

"Ah, the companion," I muttered. "I might have guessed that she would be in Normanton's pay. Well, Deacon, relieve my anxiety on this point at least—are they married yet?"

"Not quite; but they are almost in church by this time."

"Then get a cab or a vehicle of some kind without a moment's delay, and let us follow them as quickly as possible."

"I thought you would want a carriage the moment you came, sir," answered the man, "and I have a trap with a fleet little pony outside; come this way."

I followed him, and we were soon spinning over the road. But further and vexatious delay was inevitable—the marriage was not to be solemnized at Polworthy, but at a country church two miles distant.

"A sovereign if you do it in twenty minutes, my man," said Deacon to the driver, taking out his watch as he spoke.

Under this incentive the worthy Cornishman doubled his efforts, and the smart little pony flew over the ground.

"The wedding was to be at ten, and sharp the word," said Deacon to me. "Why, I declare it is almost that now," he cried. He stood up in the trap.

"Look here, my lad," he said to the driver, "two sovereigns if you gain the church door in ten minutes—three, if you do the job in five."

The man nodded, took out his whip, and began still further to stimulate the pony's efforts.

The church stood on the summit of a hill, and we could see it for some little time in the distance. The driver cracked his whip and talked encouragingly to the pony, and the distance between us and the church grew less. At last we had drawn up with a jerk outside the gates. A small crowd of people, such as

always collect to witness even the quietest sort of wedding, were loitering outside.

I sprang from the trap, and Deacon accompanied me up the narrow path which led to the porch. The church door was shut.

"There is a wedding going on inside, sir," said a man, dressed as a verger. "If you will kindly wait a few moments I can show you the church when it is over."

"Pardon me," I replied, "but I have a message for the bridegroom, and must go in at once."

I pushed him aside, turned the handle of the door, and, Deacon following me, we entered the sacred edifice. It was a little, dark church, in the Early Norman style, and just for a moment I could not see distinctly. Then my vision cleared, and I perceived a small group standing before the altar: two ladies—one elderly, one young, a tall man with a handsome presence, a priest in the white robes of his office. A slanting ray of sunshine from a painted window shone athwart the faces of priest, bride, and bridegroom, the other lady stood completely in shadow.

The bride was dressed in a quiet, grey travelling costume, and wore a large hat with plumed feathers on her head. She was very pale, her beautiful profile stood out in strong relief accentuated by the sunshine. My blood boiled hotly within me. I walked quickly up the church and joined the group. Was I in time? Was I too late? Had the fatal words, which were to join this ill-assorted couple together for all time, yet been spoken? No, I was not too late, I might still do my terrible part.

"I require and charge you both," said the priest, bending forward as he spoke, "as ye will answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow, are not joined together by God; neither is their matrimony lawful."

He paused at the end of this solemn charge, as is the invariable custom, and was then about to proceed when I stepped a little nearer.

"There is an impediment to this marriage," I said, "and it ought not to proceed."

My words fell upon the little group like a thunder-clap. Hilda Rivington turned and faced me—her beautiful eyes blazed with indignation. I looked past her, however, to the bridegroom—his face, usually so florid, had turned to the colour of grey ashes, his lips twitched, his prominent dark eyes became bloodshot.

"What does this mean?" said the clergyman, turning to me. "Speak out, sir."

"There is an impediment," I said, boldly; "and in the name of the bride's brother, who is too ill to attend here himself, I declare that



"'THERE IS AN IMPEDIMENT TO THIS MARRIAGE,' I SAID."

the marriage ought not to proceed."

"Of what nature is the impediment?" asked the priest.

"The marriage ought not to be solemnized," I said, "because"—I felt a momentary reluctance to deal the blow, to say the

dreadful words, but they must come out—
"because the bridegroom is a leper!"

Horror fell upon every face. The bride backed two or three paces away; she grew white to her lips—then, suddenly, there rang through the building a pitiful woman's cry.

"George, say it is not true—he is mad, he must be mad; George, speak!" she said.

"Come into the vestry, all of you, good people," said the clergyman. He hurried us away from the altar rails, and opened the door of a small vestry at one side of the church. Normanton staggered as he walked. Hilda Rivington clung to him, pitiably.

"It is all false," she repeated. "It is a monstrous charge, and the man who has brought it against you must be mad."

She flashed her beautiful eyes at me with indescribable scorn.

"Ask him, Miss Rivington," I said. "Ask him to tell you the truth. If, knowing all, you still wish to proceed with the marriage, I have done my part, and can say nothing further. I have come here at your brother's request. He made me take an oath that I would stop this wedding; or at least see that you knew the truth."

"My brother?" she said, looking bewildered, "my brother! But I thought he did not care, that he was indifferent now. You told me so, George."

"Never mind, it is all over, Hilda," said the Colonel. He sank down on a chair; and once again, as I had seen him do before, wiped the moisture from his forehead.

"But it is not all over," she said, recovering both her courage and her firmness. "I must know the truth—this is too bewildering. You remember, George, that you sent for me suddenly; you must remember. I came to you because you said you were ill and in trouble, but you did not tell me that you suffered from—from this horror. Not that I should have minded even that, if you had

told me the whole truth yourself. I came to you, I left my brother who was only just out of danger. Do you remember when you went back to London, and the message you brought me from him—that he was well again, that he had left the hospital, that he cared nothing for us, that he had cut me off from him for ever, that I might do as I pleased with my life as far as he was concerned? Even then I could scarcely believe it, and wanted to see him; but you said that he had left London—giving no address. Then I gave him up."

"It was false," I said. "Your brother, Miss Rivington, is still at St. George's Hospital, and even yet lies under the shadow of death. He is better, but not out of danger."

"Then the marriage is indeed broken off," said Miss Rivington. "I can bear much, and I can forgive much, but deceit, deceit, never. Come, Mr. Gilchrist, let us go."

She left the church, leaning on my arm.

The rest of this story is briefly told. Miss Rivington proved to be as inexorable in her anger as she had been firm in her love. Normanton had grossly deceived her—her eyes were at last opened—she refused even to see him again. Seeing that his game was up, the unfortunate Colonel thought it best to leave Polworthy by the next train, and I took Hilda Rivington back to London. The proud girl was shaken, miserable, ill; angry with herself, with me, and the rest of the world. When time brought softening to her feelings, however, I hoped that she would forgive me, and be at least thankful that she had been spared a fate too horrible even to contemplate.

As to Colonel Normanton, he may or may not be alive at the present moment, but I have neither heard of him nor seen him again.

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

By L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

We have taken down these stories from time to time as our friend, Paul Gilchrist, has related them to us. He is a man whose life study has been science in its most interesting forms—he is also a keen observer of human nature and a noted traveller. He has an unbounded sympathy for his kind, and it has been his lot to be consulted on many occasions by all sorts and conditions of men.

VI.—THE PANELLED BEDROOM.



THE Perownes of Queen's Marvel belonged to one of the oldest families in Staffordshire. Their country seat was remarkable for all that renders family mansions attractive. Some parts of the house were centuries old. There was the tapestry-room, the picture-gallery, the hall with its splendid suits of mail-armour; the wide, white marble stairs; then, again, there was the old painted glass in the Gothic windows; the Henry IV. chapel, where prayers were still read morning after morning; and in addition, the many modern rooms with every available comfort. The house stood on a slight eminence, and commanded an extensive view of the neighbouring country. Acres and acres of broad lands surrounded the ancient mansion—there was the Queen Anne garden, with its trees cut in many grotesque shapes—there was the old paddock and the bowling alley, and in addition, of course, the modern gardens, with their smooth, rolling lawns, and their tennis courts.

At the time of my visit to Queen's Marvel, King Winter was in the height of his reign. I made one of a large Christmas party, and I found myself on my arrival surrounded by many old friends and acquaintances.

Edward Perowne, the present owner, was an imposing looking man of about sixty years of age. He had a fine face with aquiline features, a very upright carriage, and the courteous manner which belongs more or less to a bygone school. He came into the hall to greet his guests, accompanied by his pretty daughter-in-law, and a blooming girl whom he introduced to the assembled company as his grandchild.

The weather, for the time of year, happened to be perfect—there was frost in the air and sunshine overhead. Tea was served in the hall, and afterwards we strolled about the grounds. It was somewhat late when I sought the apartment allotted to me, and I had only time to dress for dinner. My servant, Silva, had laid out my evening dress, and was waiting to help me to get into it. I told him that I should not require his services further, and he left the room.

As I dressed I noticed for the first time

the great beauty of the room which had been allotted to my use. It boasted of three doors, which at this moment stood slightly ajar—one opened on to the landing, one into a dressing-room and bath-room combined, and one into a small and beautifully furnished sitting-room. This room contained writing-table, easy lounge, many comfortable chairs, also cabinets full of curios, and a large bookcase filled from ceiling to floor with some of the best modern books. I entered the room, but finding I had no time to examine the books more particularly just now, returned to my bedroom, closing as I did so all three doors. When I did that, I gazed around me with momentary perplexity. I found myself in a very spacious bedroom, being nearly 30ft. in length; but what principally arrested my attention was a certain air of emptiness which struck me as strange. On examining the room more closely, I perceived that there was scarcely any furniture—the bed occupied an alcove in a distant corner; a large fire blazed cheerily in the opposite corner; there were a few chairs and one or two tables scattered about, nothing else—no wardrobe, no chest of drawers.

For a moment I felt even annoyed; then I began to examine the walls carefully—they were all made up of panels decorated in white and pale blue. Going near them I discovered in each what looked like a spring. I touched it: immediately the panel revolved on a pivot, and revealed furniture of different kinds within. Behind one was a very deep wardrobe, capable of holding a lady's voluminous dresses. I went to the next panel and touched the spring, and immediately a complete set of drawers of every size and description were revealed to me. Another, when pressed, showed a little table; another, a wardrobe of different construction. In fact, each panel all round the room was really hollow and held furniture of every sort and description, all by this strange means pushed out of sight except when required for use.

But the most remarkable fact about the room was that the three doors which I have already mentioned were also in panels, and when shut absolutely disappeared. The effect was strange, grotesque, and I felt that



"EACH PANEL HELD FURNITURE."

under certain conditions it might even be ghastly. Standing now in the middle of the room, I was, to all appearance, in a room without any door. I smiled to myself at the pleasant deception, and, as the gong sounded at that moment, prepared to make my exit. To do this I had to overcome a certain difficulty. Familiar as I seemed with the room, I could not for a moment find the right door. I went to one panel after another, each exactly alike, looking in vain for any handle. No handle was to be seen, but I presently saw a button in a certain panel at one end of the room. I pressed it, and a door immediately opened. I found myself then in my prettily furnished sitting-room, which, like the bedroom, was brilliantly lighted from above with electricity. I went through it, and, going downstairs, joined the rest of the guests.

We sat down, between thirty-five and forty, to dinner, and I found myself near the pretty girl who was my host's grand-daughter. Her name was Constance Perowne, she was nearly seventeen years of age, and was as gay and bright and happy looking as the heart of man could desire. She chatted volubly to me, and immediately volunteered to tell me who the different guests were.

"I always spend my holidays at Queen's Marvel," she began; "there is no place in all the world like it. You know," she added, dropping her voice to a low tone, "my father is dead, so mother lives altogether here with grandfather. That is mother sitting opposite: is she not pretty?"

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I looked across the table, and encountered the gentle gaze of a lady of about five-and-thirty, who bore but a slight resemblance to the brisk, handsome girl by my side.

"Now I will tell you who the other people are," she continued. "Please listen very attentively, for I am going to begin right away. And first of all I will commence with those in whom I am myself most interested. Do you see that lady at the further end of the table?—she is nearly as old as mother—she is in black velvet, with a diamond star in her hair. Her name is Louisa Enderby. She is my

cousin, her mother is grandfather's only daughter. Grandfather married twice, and Louisa Enderby's mother is his daughter by his first wife. My father was dear grannie's only child. Louisa has spent the greater part of her life abroad. She knows Italy, and Spain, and Corsica, and India—she has also been in Ceylon and Japan, and I believe even China. She is quite a wonderful woman, and, first and greatest of all, the most amazing mesmerist you ever came across."

I glanced in the direction of the lady, and saw a heavily built woman with thick, dark eyebrows, eyes somewhat closely set, with an unpleasant habit of looking up from under the heavy brows; a swarthy complexion, and full, red lips—her chin was cleft in the middle, and there was a good deal of obstinacy about the lower part of her face. Miss Enderby was undoubtedly a plain woman, and yet when her eyes met mine I felt a curious thrill, not exactly of sympathy, certainly not of admiration, but of a sensation which might have been a mixture of both. I could not account for it. I only knew that I was intensely interested in the lady, and would like to hear more about her.

When I entered the drawing-room after dinner, a young girl was seated in an easy chair, and Miss Enderby was standing close to her. To my surprise, and even annoyance, I saw that the victim was no other than the happy, bright girl, Constance Perowne. Obeying the orders of the mesmerist, she was now gazing fixedly at her. Miss Enderby looked quiet and very resolved—her eyes were dark with excitement, and two burning spots glowed on her cheeks.

"Remember, I have no wish to make this experiment," she said, turning and speaking to the rest of us with a curious light coming into her deep, queer eyes; "but I have

yielded to the persuasions of my many young friends. While I make the necessary passes I must ask everyone to remain as quiet as possible; the slightest noise will distract the attention of the subject of my experiments. Now, then, Constance, you must endeavour to fix your thoughts fully upon me; do not allow them to dwell on outside objects; look me full in the eyes—I will make the passes, and you will doubtless soon fall asleep."

"Oh, dear, it does seem horrible. How can you submit, Connie?" cried a merry girl who stood a few paces away.

Constance laughed.

"I long for the experience," she cried; "it promises to be quite delightful. Now, please, Louisa, begin—I am to fix my eyes on your face—well, I am doing so."

Miss Enderby bent towards her and took hold of both of her hands; she then commenced the

droop, then they slowly closed—she uttered a deep sigh, and Miss Enderby, removing her gaze, announced to us all that Constance was in a mesmeric sleep. The rest of the visitors now crowded round her and began to ask questions through the mesmerizer. What followed was really too absurd to be quoted. Constance answered each remark, however silly.

In some surprise Perowne came up and gazed at her—he shook his white head, and turned to me.

"This is humbug," he said. "Connie is pretending—I shall give her a fine talking to to-morrow. Come into my study, won't you, Gilchrist? I really cannot stand this sort of child's play any longer." He nodded to one or two of his guests, and abruptly left the room.

He and I were looking over some valuable photographs in his study when, half an hour later, one of the younger girls rushed in, with a very pale face.

"Is Mr. Gilchrist here?" she cried.

"Yes," I answered; "what is the matter?"

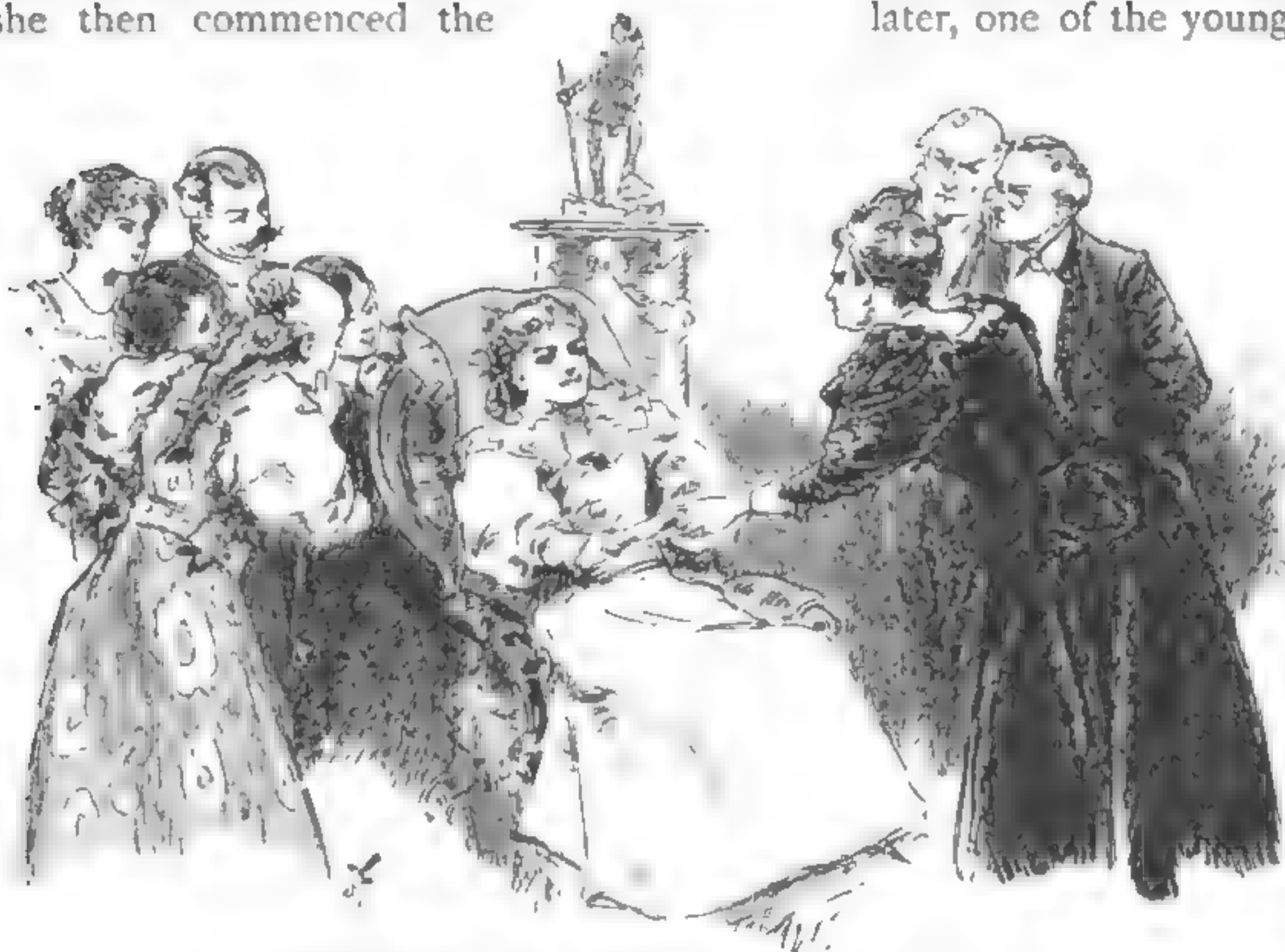
"Please come into the drawing-room—someone says you know about mesmerism. We cannot wake Connie, we have all tried; but she is in such a queer state, crying and moaning. I think Miss Enderby is really frightened."

"This comes of outsiders meddling with what they

know nothing about," I said, rising and speaking with some annoyance.

"Why, what can be the matter?" said Mr. Perowne. "You surely do not take this seriously?"

"Yes, I do," I answered. "Mesmerism is a real power. Miss Enderby has doubtless got the gift to a certain extent. She put your grand-daughter into a real mesmeric sleep, but now, finding she cannot immediately rouse the sleeper, she has in all probability become agitated and nervous. Her state of mind is communicated by sympathy to the patient. If you will allow me, Mr. Perowne,



"MISS ENDERBY TOOK HOLD OF BOTH OF HER HANDS."

usual passes which are supposed after a time to produce hypnotic sleep. I soon perceived that Miss Perowne was not going to be an easy subject—she fidgeted in her chair, her bright eyes glanced away from those of the mesmerist—the passes were made gently and without intermission, and gradually they began to take effect. The young girl's eyes were now steadily fixed on the hypnotist, who gazed back with intensity and firmness. After a time Constance began to complain of a tingling and pricking sensation in her skin—soon afterwards I noticed that her eyelids began to twitch, then to

I will go immediately to the drawing-room."

"But do you understand this thing yourself?"

"Yes; I have studied mesmerism with some care."

"You believe in it?"

"Fully—but pray do not keep me now."

I hurried back to the drawing-room, followed by Mr. Perowne and the girl who had brought us the message. We found Constance still lying back in the chair in which she had been mesmerized. Her face, which had been serene and even beatific when I last saw it, was now full of suffering, and I thought it highly probable that if any more attempts were made to rouse her by Miss Enderby, she might be seized with spasms or even convulsions. The mesmerist, with a scarlet face and agitated and highly nervous manner, was grasping the poor girl's hands, speaking in her ear, and trying to drag her from her chair.

"Let her alone," I said, "do not touch her, please. When you become calm again you must reverse the passes, but this can only be done when you are quiet and cool."

Miss Enderby started back and stared at me attentively—her face went white to her lips. I noticed that she began to tremble. I had no time then to attend to her, however; all my sympathies were centred round Miss Perowne.

"Mischievous will ensue if this young lady is agitated or worried any more," I said; "counter-influences can only do her serious harm. Let her have her sleep out, even if it lasts for a couple of hours; it cannot do her the slightest injury."

I spoke with a voice of authority, and after a time saw that I was making an impression on the agitated company. I lifted Miss Perowne very gently to a neighbouring sofa, and then sitting down near her motioned to everyone else to leave that part of the drawing-room.

They did so—the expression of suffering left the young girl's pretty face, and she slept on calmly. Miss Enderby stood near, watching her victim for a time, then she turned abruptly on her heel. A moment later I saw that she had left the room, but as she was in no condition to make the reverse passes, and as I thought it extremely unlikely that Miss Perowne would sleep for more than two hours, I did not interfere with her departure.

My prognostications turned out to be correct: between eleven and twelve Miss Perowne awoke quite naturally, looked around her, smiled, and asked where she was.

I took her hand and spoke to her gently.

"You are in the drawing-room," I said; "you need not be frightened—you have been subjected to an experiment. Miss Enderby put you to sleep."

"Then I have been mesmerized at last?" said Constance, springing to her feet.

"Yes, but think no more about it. Go to bed and dream of your Christmas pleasures."

"Is Louisa in the room?" she asked, a deep flush coming into each of her cheeks.

"No, you will see her in the morning."

"Go to bed at once, Constance," said her mother, now coming forward and taking both the girl's hands in one of hers. "Go, darling; you look quite excited."

"But, mother, there is nothing the matter with me. I have just had a lovely sleep, and am not in the least tired."

"Very well, but all the same, go to bed now. Good-night, my dear girl."

The pretty girl kissed her mother affectionately, held out one of her hands to me, and presently left the room. I took the opportunity to express my opinion to Mrs. Perowne that her daughter was a very unfit subject for such dangerous experiments.

I went upstairs and once more glanced round my apartment. As far as appearances went, I was in a room without any means of exit—each panel looked exactly like its fellow. There was no outward evidence of the big, hanging wardrobe, the capacious chest of drawers, the ordinary furniture of a bedroom. All the tables, with the exception of a small one near the bed, had disappeared—several of the chairs had also been put out of sight—the three modes of entrance were as if they did not exist. I could not but be conscious of a certain sense of puzzlement, which might, in a nervous person, even arise to a feeling of discomfort. I sat for a little longer by the fire thinking of Miss Perowne, and of Miss Enderby's remarkable face—then, feeling tired, I undressed and got into bed.

I must have awakened suddenly some hours later, for the fire was out and the chamber was in complete darkness. I found myself broad awake and listening intently. There was not a stir, not a sound in the silent room, but a sense of intense discomfort pervaded every atom of my frame. I could not account for my feelings, for I am by no means given to nerves in the ordinary sense of the word. I do not even know that I was nervous at that moment—I only felt intensely restless. Presently an irresistible impulse to rise came over me. I must yield to it—I stretched out my hand, felt along the wall, and turned on the electric light. In the

brightness which immediately ensued the peculiar emptiness of the room once again struck me with a sense of oppression. I lay still for a moment longer, struggling with the inclination to rise—at last it became irresistible; I got up and put on my dressing-gown. When I had done so I felt inclined to laugh at myself—my real wish was to return to bed, but a counter-wish which I had never experienced before impelled me to walk to the opposite end of the room. The three modes of exit so artfully concealed in panels were all, I knew, situated in that direction. In the bright light I could distinctly see the small buttons which when pressed silently opened the panel doors. I approached the centre one, pressed the button, the door revolved noiselessly back, and I perceived that I was on the threshold of the little sitting-room which I have before mentioned. To my astonishment it was bright with electric light, and standing by the mantelpiece I encountered the figure and somewhat arrogant gaze of Miss Enderby.

What did she want with me? How had she got into my private sitting-room in the dead of night? My momentary surprise gave place to indignation.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I have come to speak to you, Mr. Gilchrist," she replied; "I have something to say to you. It will not occupy much of your time."

"Pray be seated," I said; "but permit me to observe that this visit is most extraordinary."

"Not more so than my motive," was the calm reply. "A glance revealed to me this evening that you and I are *en rapport*, as we say in our phraseology. You can influence me, and I can influence you. We are both hypnotists, although you at the present moment are not fully aware of the magnitude of your own gift. I am anxious to pursue a certain course of action which you can, if you will, baulk me in. I

wish you to understand that you do so at your peril."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"To-night, after I left the room, you used your counter-influence with Mrs. Perowne to withdraw Constance from my society. Now, my intention is to see much of Constance—I wish to get her into my power—I mesmerized her to-night for the first time; I intend to mesmerize her again. But for the sudden and complete failure of nerve, which, alas! I am subject to at the most crucial moment of my life, you would not have appeared again on the scene. As it is, I am forced to betray to you what I would far rather conceal. I am a hypnotist up to a certain point—beyond that point I find my powers desert me. Now, you are a hypnotist of a much higher order—in fact, without knowing it yourself, you are a 'clairvoyant.' You can help me if you will—you can oppose me if you choose. I want you to promise not to oppose me—it is for that reason I have visited you to-night."

Having spoken in this strange way, she drew herself up, and gazed fixedly at me. I was also standing, and I looked fully back at her. Her face was full of light, her eyes were extraordinary—she was a very plain woman, but she had undoubtedly the queer gift of an almost unfathomable fascination.

"You promise?" she said, when I was silent.

"I do not know what you mean," I said; "but I may as well say at once that I distinctly disapprove of your influencing Miss Perowne. I do not think it right that young and healthy girls should be subjected to the hypnotic trance. I shall use what counter-influence I possess against you, if that is your intention—it is only fair that you should know that."

"You do it at your peril," she



"I ENCOUNTERED THE GAZE OF MISS ENDERBY."

answered; "but you will doubtless think better of this presently. I will visit you again to-morrow night; expect me."

She glided towards the door, opened it, and went out. I returned to my bed.

At breakfast, on the following morning, I observed that all the other guests were present with the exception of Miss Enderby. It occurred to me to wonder if she had become ashamed of her nightly visit, and did not wish to meet me at breakfast. I was seated near the elder Mrs. Perowne, and I turned to her with a question.

"I notice that Miss Enderby is absent," I said; "I hope there is nothing the matter with her?"

"Miss Enderby?" answered the old lady. "Oh, she never sleeps here. She and her mother occupy a house on the south side of the Park. Louisa went away almost immediately after Constance became better last night—she was out of the house long before eleven o'clock."

"Then how did she get back again?" was my mental comment. "How had she managed to visit me in my sitting-room?"

Absorbed in these thoughts, I scarcely replied to Mrs. Perowne, who must have wondered at my abstracted manner. Soon after breakfast we made up a riding party and went out for a long excursion. I found myself riding near Miss Perowne, who was mounted on a spirited horse and looked lovely in her habit. Her eyes were bright, her complexion clear; all evidence of the emotion which had been aroused last night had now completely left her blooming face. She expressed pleasure at finding herself in my company, and amused and entertained me with her girlish conversation.

"Do you know," she said, "that mother made me give her quite a solemn promise this morning?"

"What about?" I asked.

"That I would not allow Louisa to mesmerize me again."

"I am glad you have made Mrs. Perowne that promise; and now, shall we talk of something else?"

"Willingly," replied Constance. "How lovely the day is! Let us gallop across that stretch of turf."

I assented—she whipped up her horse, and we very soon distanced the other riders to a considerable extent. We halted presently for breath by the roadside, and Constance pushed the tumbled hair out of her eyes.

"I cannot help feeling sorry I made that promise to mother," she began, slightly panting as she spoke. "It has been quite an old wish of mine that Louisa should mesmerize or hypnotize me. Mother says that Louisa was always a very queer child, not a bit like any of us, and when she was quite young she was sent abroad to be educated. She came home when she was nearly grown up, just before the—the dreadful tragedy of grandfather's life occurred."

"What was that?" I asked, looking at the lovely face of the young girl.

"It was about my father, Mr. Gilchrist. He was my grandfather's only son. He married when he was very young, only twenty-one, and he died before"—here her voice slightly faltered—"months before I was born. Mother sometimes speaks of him, but not very often. I will show you his photograph if you will come to my private sitting-room some day. I love his photograph—and sometimes I feel that he is near me. Dear father, everyone loved him so much, and he met his death in such a dreadfully tragic manner. He was drowned while fishing about two miles away from Queen's Marvel. He fell into Lock-Overpool. Mother nearly lost her reason at the time; and as to grandfather, he shut himself up and would not see anyone for years and years—it is only lately that he has at all got over it. You see, he had no other child except Aunt Kate, and for some reason she was never a special favourite of his."

"Then who inherits Queen's Marvel?" I asked.

Constance turned her gentle eyes full upon my face.

"At some very far distant date I do," she answered. "It is a great inheritance for such a little person as I am, and I would much, much rather have nothing to do with it, but grandfather says I must take my responsibilities; and he is going to have me carefully trained—he wants me to be a good business woman and to understand all about the estate; but, Mr. Gilchrist, we are spending too much time chatting; we ought to turn our horses' heads homeward now."

Some fresh guests had arrived during our absence, and the evening which followed was all that was gay and entertaining. Miss Enderby, dressed again in her black velvet, with the one diamond star in her dark hair, was, notwithstanding her plainness and peculiar physiognomy, the life and soul of the party. She had a somewhat deep voice, with penetrating notes in it—whenever she

spoke people turned to look at her or to listen to her sentence. She seemed scarcely to trouble herself to entertain, and yet she entertained without effort—her stories were gay, forcible, and to the point—she led the conversation when it languished, and when it grew bright and witty, sustained it at that level.

In the drawing-room she gave us some music—I asked her if she could sing, but she said she had not a note in her voice. Her music, however, like herself, was arresting and convincing—it seemed immediately to penetrate beneath the surface, to stay the thoughts, to quicken the brain, to rouse the intelligence; she improvised a good deal, and presently



"HER MUSIC WAS ARRESTING AND CONVINCING."

a number of the guests clustered round the grand piano to listen to her. From grave to gay she wandered—from the solemn to the trivial, from the deep and the passionate to the light and airy. I found myself involuntarily approaching nearer and nearer to her side. Suddenly she stopped in the middle of a sonata, raised her full greenish eyes to my face, smiled somewhat vaguely, and rose from her seat.

"Go on, go on," said several of the guests.

"No, enough; I am not in the humour," she answered. She glided away, and I presently saw her leaving the room.

By-and-by it was time for us all to retire to our respective rooms. I went to mine, poked up the fire, flung myself into an easy chair, and gave myself up to thinking of Louisa Enderby. She was a very plain woman—she was not even specially young,

and yet no attractive girl had ever a stronger power of arresting the imagination, of touching—was it the heart, or some other more bewildering, more intangible force? Once again I recalled her visit of the previous night—it was strange, incomprehensible. Her manner of to-day, too, was absolutely baffling—during the whole evening she had never favoured me with special attention, but neither had she made the slightest attempt to avoid me.

As she rose suddenly from that music which was haunting my ears even now, she had, it is true, given me one glance, a glance which set my pulses beating, but which in itself only puzzled and disturbed. I sprang suddenly from my chair; I resolved to think of Miss Enderby no more.

I was tired; I would go straight to bed, and to sleep. I had scarcely laid my head on my pillow before slumber visited me—slumber healthy and dreamless; but once again, as twenty-four hours before, I awoke in solitude and darkness to find myself listening intently. In the first moment of waking, I forgot where I was; Miss Enderby's very existence was

blotted from my brain; then memory rushed over me. I recalled what had happened the night before; a sensation, not of nervousness, but a sort of peculiar and very real horror, visited me. I remembered Miss Enderby's promise to come to see me again on this night. Would she keep it? No; ridiculous, impossible! She did not sleep in the house. If she had managed by some underhand means to creep back to Queen's Marvel on the previous night, she surely could not perform this feat twice undiscovered.

I resolved once again to banish her from my mind, and turning on my pillow tried to resume my interrupted nap. This I found impossible. The same queer sense of restlessness which had overpowered me on the previous evening occurred again. I had almost a sensation as if I were struggling with someone who wanted to pull

me from my pillow. Unable to resist the queer and overpowering desire to rise, I sat up in bed, felt along the wall until my hand came in contact with the electrical communication, and turning the handle I once more filled the room with brightness. The chamber looked queer and empty as it had done on the previous night. Its emptiness now began to impress me disagreeably. I almost wished that it had been my fate to be put into an ordinary bedroom. I began to recollect old stories which had troubled me in my long-ago boyhood—stories of rooms with collapsing walls, of rooms with traps of different kinds, all set for the destruction of unwary travellers.

I remembered one tale in particular of a certain hotel in France, where the top of the bed came down upon the visitor and crushed him to atoms. With an effort I shook myself out of this unpleasant memory. I was not staying at an hotel. On the contrary, I was in the modern wing of a happy English home. No more luxurious chamber could be found in the length and breadth of the land. It was queer that I should be the victim of, not nerves, but a state of horror which I could not in the least account for or understand. I looked again in the direction of the three doors: they were invisible. It occurred to me as quite possible that these doors, which could only be opened by touching a spring, might be easily locked in the same way, and that the miserable inmate of this room might find no door out of which to make his exit. I should, of course, laugh at these forebodings when daylight arrived, but they now impressed me disagreeably, and I sat up in bed with my heart beating hard.

"Ridiculous," I said to myself. "I will not be forced out of my bed to-night."

I was about to turn off the electric light, when once again, and more powerfully than before, the desire to rise overwhelmed me. I could not resist it. It was as impossible for me now to lie in bed as if I had been a child trying to resist the mandates of a stern parent. I rose as I had

done on the previous night, and put on a warm dressing-gown which stood near. When I had done so I laughed aloud in a hollow manner.

"This is too absurd," I murmured. "I shall just get straight back to bed, and take a good dose of quinine in the morning—the fact is, I cannot be well." I approached the bed, but a power which I could not withstand kept me from getting into it, and now a queer sensation visited me. I no longer felt the least desire to oppose the influence which was undoubtedly exercising its sway over all my actions. I walked hurriedly across the room, pressed the button of the centre door, opened it as I had done on the previous night, stood again on the threshold of the little sitting-room, and once more encountered the fixed and intent gaze of Louisa Enderby. She was standing then, as she had done the night before, on the hearth—she wore her black velvet dress and the diamond star glittered in her hair. When she saw me a ghost of a smile flitted across her face, then it vanished. I noticed that her features were drawn, as if in mental agony—her queer, greenish eyes burned with a curious light.

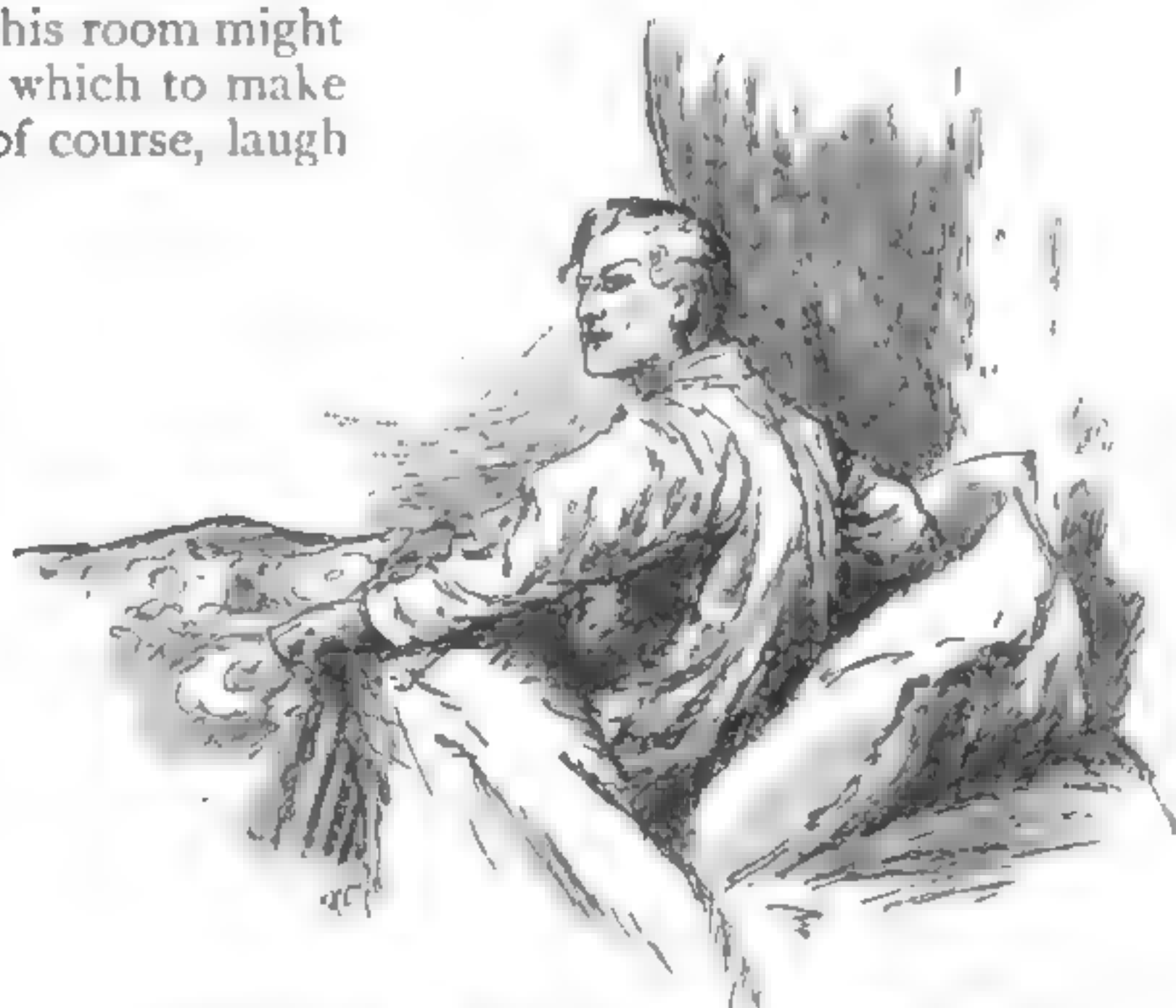
"Well," I cried, "this is most extraordinary. Will you please explain how you have got into the house?"

"That does not concern you, Mr. Gilchrist," she replied. "I said I should visit you again—I have kept my word. We hypnotists never break our engagements. Will you please sit down?—I have something to say to you."

I found myself impelled to sit.

"You perceive," she said, with a playful and yet intensely disagreeable smile, "that against your will you are more or less under my power. I have come here, no matter how. Suffice it to you that I am in this

house. You were in a calm and peaceful slumber when the near vicinity of my presence made itself felt to you. You awoke; you felt restless and uncomfortable. I willed you to come to me in this room. You



"I SAT UP IN BED WITH MY HEART BEATING HARD."

struggled against my will. In the end I conquered, as I knew I should. You are here—I will you now to listen to me quietly.”

“Say what you have to say, and be quick about it,” I answered.

“I warned you last night that you would do no good to yourself by interfering with me. Against my will you used your influence to-day to put Constance against me. Why did you do so?”

“Because I consider the hypnotic influence bad for any healthy young girl,” I answered.

“Indeed. Then, notwithstanding your undoubted power as a mesmerist, you do not thoroughly understand the curative influence of the gift which you possess.”

“That is neither here nor there,” I answered, impatiently. “Miss Perowne is quite well. My motto always is to let well alone.”

Miss Enderby continued to gaze at me fixedly. The haggard look deepened on her face.

“You are doubtless aware of the value of the young life which you seek to protect.”

“I fail to understand you,” I answered.

“Folly!” she interrupted; “you must know what I mean. Constance as the only child of her father inherits Queen’s Marvel.”

I nodded to this self-evident fact, but did not speak.

“And I,” she continued, “as the only child of my mother, inherit nothing beyond a miserable pittance, and even that is not mine while my mother lives.”

I did not reply—she continued to fix me with her eyes.

“In order to influence you,” she said, “I see I must tell you my story. I will do so as briefly as possible. My father died when I was four years old—he died in a lunatic asylum, where I shall doubtless follow him some day, but not yet, if I can help it. After his death I lived for a time in this house with my mother, but at seven years old I was sent to France to be educated. I was never like other children—I was always moody and peculiar—from my earliest days I was filled with a strange bitterness of spirit—I rebelled against the fate which had given me existence. I received an extraordinary education—just the worst sort for a nature like mine. The lady who had charge of me had dipped from her earliest years into the strange science which we call mesmerism. She quickly discovered that I was a medium, that I had extraordinary occult powers—she encouraged them, she trained me—I became, after a year

or two of her manipulations, a very valuable clairvoyant. When still quite young, she took me with her to India, and we both studied mesmerism amongst the Hindus. Shortly after completing my eighteenth year, I came back again to England; my friend had died—my mother was anxious that I should live with her, and I came to her to the house which she now inhabits. My uncle, my mother’s step-brother, the heir to this vast property, had just been married. I hated him for living at all; but for him I should have been the heiress of Queen’s Marvel. I longed for the place with an avarice, with a passion, which you who are born to wealth can scarcely comprehend. I smothered my sensations, however, and tried to make myself agreeable to the family. I was never beautiful, but I had the power of fascination. In particular, I fascinated my uncle; he was young, only a few years my senior; he was handsome, fully endowed with all that can render life delightful. He had exactly what I had not—a perfect temper, a sweet and generous spirit. I hated him for those gifts as much as I hated him for his wealth.

“Perhaps you have already heard that my Uncle Gerald died when out fishing—he was found drowned in Lock-Overpool, which is part of our river about two miles from here. His fishing-rod was floating on the water, he had a blow on his head, and it was supposed that he had fallen from the rock into the deep part of the pool; and as he had his waders on, he, of course, sank immediately. That was the story credited by the country, and a verdict of ‘Found drowned’ was returned by the coroner. Now, I will tell you how he really came by his death.”

I had been sitting, as she had desired me, up to that moment. Now I rose. The light in her eyes, the queer sort of terror on her face, absolutely startled me. She suddenly crouched slightly downwards, became rigid for a moment, as if she were going to have a cataleptic fit—but then, making a great effort, straightened herself once more.

“Why do you drag my soul from me?” she said.

“I ask for no confidences,” I replied, but as I said the words I found myself looking firmly into her eyes. “All the same,” I continued, “I know you will give them to me.”

“Yes,” she panted, “I cannot help myself. The truth for the first time passes my lips.”

She now stood stock-still, her eyes were

fixed on me as firmly as if she were in a trance, her words came out rapidly.

"The uncle whom I hated, who stood between me and this great property, *did not meet his death by accident!* I was fond of accompanying him on his fishing expeditions. Although no one knew it, I went with him on that special day. He waded into deep water, and I sat on the bank and watched him. He was not far from the pool. I had always had a horror of Lock-Overpool; its depths, its blackness—for it lay partly under a deep, overhanging cave—had always fascinated me. I found myself now gazing into its gloomy depths—as I did so, that demon which seemed to have got into me at my birth suddenly rose and took mastery of me.

"‘Uncle Gerald,’ I cried, ‘will you do me a favour?’

"‘What is that?’ he asked.

"‘I have a fancy for that green fern which grows right in the depths of the rock above Lock-Overpool: will you get it for me?’

"‘With pleasure,’ he replied—he admired me, he generally had the power to draw out what little good I possessed. He returned to the shore, and without removing his waders went carefully along the ledge of rock which jutted considerably out over the pool—his gaff lay on the bank—his back was to me—I followed him cautiously—madness was doubtless in my soul—I struck him a heavy blow with the iron instrument on the back of his head—he fell as if he were shot, bounded against a rock, and sank like a stone to the bottom of the pool. With his waders on I knew he had no chance of rising. The moment I had done the deed I repented; I

threw his fishing-rod on the water, and rushed home, mad with fright and terror. No one had seen me leave the house, and no one had seen me return; not the faintest ghost of suspicion was ever attached to my name; but from that moment my life has been a torment. Now you know all. I did the evil deed for the sake of the property, but in the end Fate has conquered, for my uncle’s widow, unknown to me, was about to give birth to a child. Three months after my uncle’s death Constance was born; she is in the direct succession, and inherits the bulk of the property. By-and-by she will marry and her husband will take her name. Now, Mr. Gilchrist, I mean to get Constance under my influence; I do not wish to commit murder a second time, but I must have Constance Perowne as my tool. If you dare to defy me you will suffer."

She stopped speaking suddenly, flung her arms down to her side, and stared straight past me towards the other side of the room.

"I want you to go away," she said, after a long pause. Her voice had altered, it had become feeble and faint. "You trouble me; I am *en rapport* with you, you are in close sympathy with me; you can even read my thoughts. I came here to-night because I could not help it; I have told you this because I could not help it. Now, will you go—will you leave me alone?"

She suddenly fell on her knees; she approached nearer and crouched at my feet.

"Get up," I said; "you do not know what you are saying—there is the door; you must leave me now."

"Not until you have promised," she said.

"I will not promise."

"Then you are in peril. At least let me advise you to sleep in another room. Farewell." She walked slowly through the open doorway, closed the door after her, and vanished.



"HE FELL AS IF HE WERE SHOT."

I did not go to bed again that night. Overpowered by the emotions which Miss Enderby's terrible tale had aroused, I paced up and down my chamber. When the first dawn began to break I dressed myself and went out. The day just beginning was Christmas Eve.

Against my will my steps wandered in the direction of Miss Enderby's house. I did not want to go to her, and yet I was impelled to do so. Suddenly I saw her turning a corner and coming to meet me—she was dressed in a neat costume, and looked both fresh and calm. She came up and wished me "Good-morning" in a pleasant, everyday voice.

I stared hard at her; she met my gaze without flinching; her face was as indifferent as it had been on the previous night.

"You are out early," she remarked. "At this time of year there is nothing to tempt one abroad before breakfast."

"I came to meet you," I answered.

"Indeed!" she replied, raising her brows in well-acted astonishment; "then perhaps you will turn, for I am coming to breakfast at Queen's Marvel."

Her coolness half maddened me. As we slowly returned to the house I resolved to put her to the test.

"You wonder why I am out so early," I said. "I will tell you. I have had a restless night; after such a night as I have just gone through one often feels the better for a walk."

"I am sorry you slept badly," she replied, and now I noticed, or thought I noticed, a light awakening in her eyes; "but I forgot," she added; "your restlessness can doubtless be accounted for—you sleep in the panelled room."

"Yes—it is a luxurious apartment."

"Very," she replied, and the ghost of a smile played round her lips.

"The panelled room is provided with every comfort," I continued, "and not the least of its charms is the sitting-room, with the cabinets and curios which belong to it. The sitting-room is a good place for a rendezvous."

"An excellent place," she replied. "Mr. Gilchrist, we must hurry unless we wish to be late for breakfast."

"There is plenty of time," I answered, and now I stood perfectly still and compelled her to face me.

"I want to ask you a question, Miss Enderby," I said. "Why did you twice visit me in the dead of the night in the sitting-

room which is connected with the panelled bedroom?"

"I never visited you," she cried. "What in the world do you mean?"

"You must be mad, or you are acting a part," I replied. "You know you came to see me last night, and the night before, in the sitting-room adjoining the panelled bedroom."

"No," she answered; "it is you who are mad. I do not even sleep in the house," but now her face turned ghastly, she panted, and, suddenly losing her self-control, grasped both my hands. "Tell me what you mean," she cried.

"I will," I answered. "On the first night of my arrival you compelled me to get up; you compelled me to go to my sitting-room; you were there waiting for me; again last night you visited me, and on that occasion you told me——"

"My God! what?" she asked, in a low voice, which was almost like a hiss, "what did I say?"

"You told me the secret of Lock-Overpool."

When I said these words, she gave a cry like that of a hunted animal—she turned away from me and covered her face with both her hands.

"I feared this," she gasped, after a moment. "Something told me that you were exercising an awful power over me. Mr. Gilchrist, why do you mesmerize me? Why do you force me to come to you? Why do you drag that, that—oh, I must say no more; you have frightened me. I wish you would leave Queen's Marvel. What can I do to make you go?"

"Nothing at present," I answered, with coolness. "You have imparted to me a very ghastly secret. I am not prepared to say yet what I shall do about it."

With a mighty effort she recovered herself. the fear left her eyes—she stood up once more quite cool and composed, and faced me.

"You had a bad dream," she said. "You had a bad dream, nothing more."

We were interrupted at that moment by the hearty voice of Mr. Perowne himself.

"Halloa! there you are," he cried.

Miss Enderby ran forward to meet him. She looked quite composed—there was a smile round her lips, and pleasant words came from her mouth.

"I am coming to breakfast with you this morning, grandfather," she said.

He gave her a friendly nod, then turned to me, and we three returned to the house.



"SHE GAVE A CRY LIKE THAT OF A HUNTED ANIMAL."

From that moment Miss Enderby avoided me. As far as I could tell, her eyes never once encountered mine. That night, too, I had no mysterious and restless desires as I slept in the panelled room. I was not compelled to leave my bed. Miss Enderby did not again intrude upon the hours devoted to slumber. The story she had told me, however, did not lessen its influence on my mind.

I felt puzzled how to act with regard to it—it was either true, and Miss Enderby was a murderer, a most dangerous person to have abroad; or she was mad. I resolved as soon as possible to get some particulars with regard to the death of Constance Perowne's father. Whether Miss Enderby's tale told to me in so strange a manner was true or false, however, it had lain in oblivion for eighteen years, and I determined not to cast a shadow upon the Christmas festivities by taking any steps in the matter just then. The further mystery of her visits I was unable to fathom—she had either come to me in a state of clairvoyance, or I had dreamt the whole thing—the latter supposition I did not believe for a moment; the former seemed to be the most likely solution. The little-understood science of mesmerism accounts for even more mysterious events than the strange visitations I had undergone. Miss Enderby, who knew the ways of the house well, might easily have

secreted the key of a side door, and so found her way to my sitting-room without difficulty.

During the week which supervened between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, Miss Enderby was in and out of the house continually. As usual she was the life of the place—counselling Constance, helping her grandfather, entertaining the guests as no one else could entertain them. As the days went by, however, I began to notice in Constance herself a subtle change—she did not look well—the bright, laughing light in her eyes was subdued—once or twice when in my neighbourhood I thought I heard her sigh.

On New Year's Night there was to be a grand ball, to which the county was invited. The evening before Constance was standing near me—I touched her on her arm.

"You are sad about something," I said. We happened to be alone. She turned her sweet young face, looked at me fully, and then burst into tears.

"Don't, don't," she sobbed. "*Don't* drag my secret from me."

"I do not want to," I answered, gently; "but you look in trouble. Can I help you in any way?"

"I do not think so; I am only unhappy because I am disobeying mother."

"In what way?"

"Louisa has mesmerized me again. She asks me about you, and—but there she is coming—please do not tell her I have said anything."

She flitted away, and I turned in another direction.

Next day we dined early, and I went up to my room after dinner to rest for a short time before the festivities of the evening began. I was seated by my fire, reading the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, when a very light tap came on one of the doors of my room.

Before I had even time to say "Come in," the door opened and the lovely, ethereal young form of Constance Perowne stood on the threshold. She was in her ball-dress, which she had not put on at dinner; a circlet of pearls formed a coronet round her head; she carried a large white feather fan in one

hand, and her gloves in the other. I noticed as she stood on the threshold that she slowly unfurled the fan.

She looked at me vaguely—there was a peculiar expression in her eyes. It needed but a glance to show me what had occurred—the girl was in a state of trance or mesmeric sleep. I went up and spoke to her.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "What do you want?"

"There is a box of old silver in a safe at the back of one of the panels," she replied. "I have come to fetch it." She looked past me, answering my questions but not apparently seeing me. I glanced at her eyes; they were dull, and totally unconscious of vision—nevertheless, I knew that she was seeing acutely with the inner sense of the clairvoyant. I did not reply to her, and she walked across the room.

Now, in my peregrinations round this curious chamber I had carefully investigated the contents of every panel except one—that one had, to all appearance, no spring, and although I had felt carefully along the wall, I was never able to open it. It was to this special panel now that Constance Perowne directed her steps. Without the slightest hesitation she pressed her finger against an ornamental trail of ivy, which had been painted on the woodwork—when she did so

the panel revolved back as the others had done, and revealed inside a long and narrow safe, made of solid iron. The safe was about 3ft. to 4ft. deep. The moment it opened Constance went in, threw her fan and gloves on the floor, and raising her arms began with all her might and main to pull forward a heavy iron box which stood on a shelf.

"It is so heavy," she panted; "I cannot lift it."

"Let me help you," I replied.

Just as if she were in an ordinary state, she stepped out of the safe, and I went in. She stood on the threshold—I stretched up my arms to take down the box, and as I was in the act of doing so, suddenly found myself in complete darkness. The spring door of the panel had come to; I was shut up in a living tomb. I called loudly, but the mesmerist was quite incapable of hearing me. The place in which I found myself was not only dark and narrow, but also, I was quite certain, almost sound-proof. It was a safe built of solid iron, and, doubtless, hermetically sealed. I stood still for a moment to take in the awful position. All too quickly I guessed what had occurred. Miss Enderby had planned this terrible catastrophe; she had made Constance her tool, and had sent her into my room to entrap me into the iron chest. The perspiration stood out on my forehead. I knew that unless I could find a quick mode of exit my hours were numbered; nay, more, that I had but a few minutes to live. I should all too quickly absorb the air in this narrow chamber, and in a very short time should die of asphyxia. For a moment despair seized me—then I resolved to have a

fight for my life. Making a rapid calculation, I thought it probable that there was enough air in the safe to last me from ten minutes to a quarter of an hour. I felt in my pocket, took out a silver case which contained matches, and struck one—already the confined space of my living tomb was taking effect upon me—there was a loud buzzing in my ears—my heart throbbed with difficulty—I panted as one does who is suffering death from suffocation. I did not dare to strike another match, for the light would further exhaust my limited supply of air; but in a brief glance



"IT IS SO HEAVY," SHE PANTED.

round my tomb, I saw just over my head and behind the iron box what looked like a bolt. I tapped the wall at this place—it sounded hollow. Dizzy and reeling, but putting forth herculean strength, I endeavoured to pull the heavy iron box from its position, and then flung myself madly against the wall where it sounded hollow. Already I was almost unconscious, but with the strength of a madman I flung myself against the solid iron. Miracle of miracles, it gave way!—I felt a cold breath of air, and in less than a minute was myself again. Lighting another match, I found myself on the edge of some steep steps which went down into apparently bottomless depths. I descended them carefully, striking a match from time to time to guide my steps. Very charily I got to the bottom of the steps, and then pursued my way along a very narrow and winding passage, which presently brought me to an old door thick with cobwebs, in which was a rusty lock. This door had evidently not been opened for many years. Seizing a bar of iron which happened to be on the floor, I pushed back the hasp of the lock—a breath of cooler, fresher air immediately greeted me, and I found myself out of doors and in the direction of the servants' part of the house. As quickly as possible I once more entered the house and regained my chamber by means of the servants' staircase. I went in, shut the door, flung myself into a chair, and sat for some time thinking over the position of affairs. Whether Miss Enderby was mad or sane, my plain duty now was to acquaint her relations with the awful occurrence which had just taken place—it was not safe to have such a woman at large. Doubtless even now she thought that I was dead, as I assuredly should have been but for the discovery of the secret door at the back of the safe.

After resting for about an hour I carefully changed my dress, and went down to the ball-room. I heard the merry strains of music going on below, and entered the ball-room by one of the side doors. The first person I saw was Constance Perowne—her cheeks were blooming—she looked radiant in her white dress—the light of youth and happiness shone in her hazel eyes. When she saw me she smiled; she was, as I knew afterwards, perfectly unconscious of the terrible deed she had just committed. I did not trouble her with any remark, but went further into the room. I stepped up to an open window and, partly concealing myself behind a curtain, began to look

around. I was now able to watch Miss Enderby without being seen myself. She was dressed, as usual, in black velvet, which on this occasion was cut low, and exhibited a lovely white throat and well-shaped arms. The diamond star glittered in her dusky locks; her queer, green eyes were full of light; I fancied I saw a malignant smile round her lips. Doubtless she supposed herself now quite safe—her secret being, as she imagined, in the keeping of the dead. She was dancing with a handsome man, who evidently was succumbing to her fascinations. She was talking to him, showing the gleam of her white teeth, and the queer, mesmeric light in her eyes. He laughed and seemed amused as he listened. Gradually they approached my side—I stepped back a little. They both paused close to me, and I heard her at that moment utter a sigh. I then observed that, notwithstanding her apparent mirth, she was the victim of an uneasy terror. Seen close, her face looked haggard.

I could not resist the temptation to stretch out one of my hands and lay it on her shoulder. She was talking to her partner at the moment, and they were in the act of resuming the waltz. When she felt my hand she turned slowly and looked back at me. As her eyes met mine terror blanched her face, an expression of horror altered each feature—she sank away from the firm touch of my hand nearer and nearer to the ground, looking back at me as she did so all the time with an indescribable and most terrible expression. I have not the least doubt that she thought I was a ghost—it was impossible for her to believe that I could have found any way out of my living tomb. With a loud cry she sank the next moment in a sort of fit at my feet. Some people rushed forward and bore the fainting woman out of the ball-room. When she recovered partial consciousness she was insane. A doctor was summoned, who ordered the utmost quiet, and no one could understand the queer seizure.

Within a week from that date, Miss Enderby died, without ever having one gleam of returning sanity. Doubtless the shock of seeing me when she thought I had quitted the world had completely overbalanced her already too excitable brain. With her death, the necessity for disclosing her terrible secret no longer existed.

As to Constance, she is my special friend, and always will be, and I hope to her dying day she may never know what a near escape she had of taking my life.



"IN MID AIR THE MACHINE EXPLODED."

(See page 15.)

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

VII.—A RACE WITH THE SUN.

IT was in the spring of 1895 that the following apparently unimportant occurrence took place. I returned home somewhat late one evening, and was met by my servant, Silva, with the words :—

"A lady, sir—a nun, I think, from her dress—is waiting for you in your study."

"What can she want with me?" I asked. I felt annoyed, as I was anxious to get to work on some important experiments.

"She is very anxious to have an interview with you, sir—she called almost immediately after you had gone out, and said if I would allow her she would wait to speak to you, as her mission was of some importance. I showed her into the study, and after a quarter of an hour she rang the bell, and desired me to tell you that she would not wait now, but would call again later. She left the house, but came back about ten minutes ago. I did not like to refuse her, and ——"

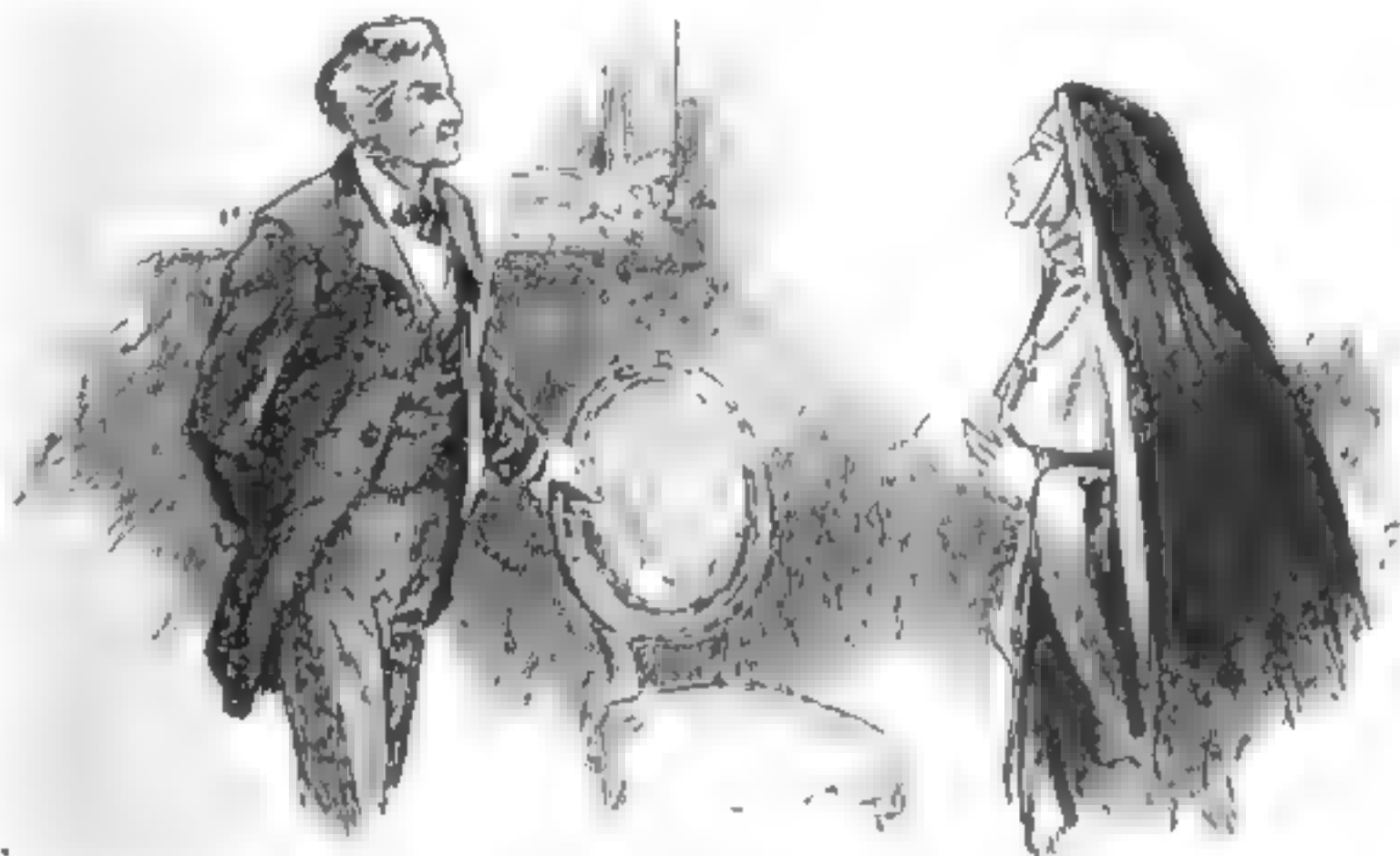
"Quite right, Silva ; I will see to the matter," I answered.

I went straight to the study, where a bright, young-looking woman, in the full costume of a nun of the Church of Rome, started up and came forward to meet me. She made a brief apology for intruding upon me, and almost before I could reply to her, plunged into the object of her visit. It so happened that she knew a young man

in whom I was interested, having come across him when in hospital—she confirmed my views with regard to him—told me a subscription was being got up for his benefit, and asked if I would contribute towards it. I gave her two sovereigns—she expressed much gratitude, and speedily left the house.

At this time I was lecturing in several quarters, and did not give another thought to such an apparently uninteresting event. In the autumn of the same year, however, I was destined to recall it with vivid and startling distinctness.

During the special autumn I was, as I fondly hoped, approaching the *magnum opus* of my life—I was in a fair way to the discovery of a new explosive which would put gunpowder, dynamite, and all other explosives completely in the shade. It was to be smokeless, devoid of smell, and also of such a nature that it would be impossible for it to ignite except when placed in certain combinations. Its propelling power would be greater than anything in existence ; in short, if it turned out what I dreamed, it would be



"SHE MADE A BRIEF APOLOGY FOR INTRUDING UPON ME."

a most important factor in case of war, and of immense use to England as a nation. Giddy hopes often throbbed in my head as I worked over it.

My experiments were progressing favourably, but I still wanted one link. Try as I would I could not obtain it. No combinations that I attempted would produce the desired result, and in much vexation of spirit I was wondering if, after all, the secret of my life would never reveal itself, when on a certain afternoon Silva opened the door of my laboratory and announced two visitors. This was an unusual thing for him to do, and I started up in surprise and some involuntary annoyance. A tall man had entered the room—he was dark, with the swarthy complexion of a gipsy; his eyes were small, closely-set, and piercing; he had a long beard and a quantity of thick hair falling in profusion round his neck. Immediately following him was a little man, in every sense of the word his antitype. He was thin and small, clean-shaven, and with a bald head. The two men were total strangers to me, and I stood still for a moment unable to account for this intrusion. The elder of the two came forward with outstretched hands.

"Pardon me," he said, "I know I am intruding. My name is Paul Lewin—this is my friend, Carl Kruse. We have had the pleasure of listening to your lecture at the Royal Society, and have taken these uncere- monious means of forcing ourselves upon you, for you are the only man in England who can do what we want."

"Pray, sit down," I said to them both. I hastily cleared two chairs, and my uninvited guests seated themselves. Lewin's face seemed fairly to twitch with eagerness, but Kruse, on the contrary, was very quiet and calm. He was as immovable in expression as his companion was the reverse. The elder man's deep-set eyes flashed; he looked me all over from head to foot.

"You are the only person who can help us," he repeated, breathing quickly as he spoke.

"Pray explain yourself," I said to him.

"I will do so, and in a few words. Mr. Kruse and I heard you lecture in the early part of last summer. From hints you let drop it became abundantly clear to us both that you were in the pursuit of a discovery which has occupied the best part of both our lives. We are in a difficulty which we believe that you can explain away. We had hoped not to ask you for any assistance, but time is precious—any moment you may perfect your most

interesting experiments. In that case the patent and the honour would be yours, and we should be out of it. Now, we don't want to be out of it, and we have come here to ask you frankly if you will co-operate with us."

I felt the warm blood rushing into my face.

"I don't understand you," I said; "to what discovery do you allude?"

"To that of the great new explosive," said Kruse.

I sprang to my feet in ill-suppressed excitement.

"You must be making a mistake," I said. "I have not breathed a word of the matter over which I am engaged to a living soul."

"You dropped hints at your lecture, which made it plain to us that you and we were on the same track," said Kruse. "But, here, I can prove the matter." He took a note-book hurriedly out of his pocket and began to read from it.

I listened to him in dismay and astonishment. There was not the least doubt that these men were working on my own lines; nay, more, that their intelligence was equal to my own, and it was highly probable that they would be first in the field.

"The fact is this," said Lewin: "my friend and I have been really working with you step by step. While you have been perfecting your great explosive in your London laboratory, we have been conducting matters on a larger and freer scale in our more extensive laboratories off the Cornish coast. The solitude of our place, too, enables us to test our explosive in the open air. Now, we know exactly the point to which you have come, and your present difficulty is"—he dropped his voice to a semi-whisper—"you are trying to combine certain gases to produce a certain result. Now, we have discovered what you want, but our explosive is still far from perfect, owing to the instability of nitrogen chloride"—he dropped his voice again.

"You can help us," he said, abruptly; "I see by your face that you have certain information which will be valuable to us. Now we, on our side, have information which will be of immense benefit to you. Will you join us in the matter? You have but to name your own price."

I could not help staring at Lewin in astonishment—he started impatiently from his seat.

"This is the state of the case, sir," he continued; "our lives have been spent over this matter—it is a great work—a magnificent

discovery; it is nearly complete. When absolutely completed we intend to offer it to the German Government for something like a million sterling—but there is a probability that you may be first in the field. If you patent your discovery before ours, we are done men. Will you be content to work with us, or”—he stopped, his face was crimson, his eyes seemed to start from his head.

“My friend is right,” said Kruse, “but

the teeth. The discovery of this explosive, if it means all that I hope it may mean, will be a most important factor in case of war.”

Kruse laughed somewhat nervously.

“We are not so quixotic as you are,” he said; “I have a wife, and my friend, Lewin, has large claims upon him which make it essential that he should make money where he can. Now, will you come to terms or not? The fact is this, our knowledge

is indispensable to you, your knowledge is indispensable to us—shall we go shares or not?”

I thought for a little. I had begun by being much annoyed with my strange visitors, but now, in spite of myself, I was interested. They not only knew what they were talking about, but they had something to sell, which I was only too willing to buy.

“Can I look at your notes for a moment?” I said to Kruse.

He immediately handed me his note-book. I glanced over what he had written down—his statements were clear and to the point. There was no doubt that he and his companions were working on identical lines with myself.

“I cannot give you an answer immediately,” I said; “your visit has astonished me, the knowledge that you and I are working at a similar discovery has amazed me still more. Will you call upon me again to-morrow? I may then be in a position to speak to you.”

They rose at once, Lewin with ill-suppressed irritation, but Kruse quietly.

The moment I was alone I gave myself up to anxious thought. It was impossible to pursue any further investigations that day, and, leaving the laboratory, I spent the rest of the evening in my study. At night I slept little, and on the following morning had resolved to make terms with the Cornish men. They both arrived at ten o'clock, accompanied now by a pretty young woman, whom Kruse introduced as his wife. The moment I saw her face I was puzzled by an intangible likeness to somebody else—she



he is far too excitable: I have told him so over and over. We know of your discovery, Mr. Gilchrist; we believe that you can help us, and we know that we can help you. We are working on the same lines. The discovery of this new explosive means money, a very large fortune, and fame. Now, we don't mean to resign our own share in this without a struggle, but we are satisfied to go hand in glove with you. Will you visit us in Cornwall and help us with our experiment? We will impart to you gladly what we know, on condition that you in your turn give us information. You thus see that between us the discovery is complete; without our united efforts it may be a very long time before it is ready for use. Let us go shares in the matter.”

“I am not working at this thing for money,” I said. “I am an unmarried man, and have as much money as I need. When my discovery is complete I shall offer it to the English Government—they can do what they please with it—my reward will be the gain which it will give to my country. This is a time of peace, but on all hands men are armed to

was fair haired, and, I had little doubt, had German blood in her veins—her eyes were large and blue, and particularly innocent in expression—her mouth was softly curved; she had pretty teeth and a bright smile—she was like thousands of other women, and yet there was a difference. I felt certain that she was not a stranger to me, but where and under what possible circumstances I had met her before was a mystery which I could not fathom. She apologized in a pretty way for forcing herself into my presence, but told me she was really as much interested in the discovery as her husband and friend, and as the matter was of the utmost importance, had insisted on coming with them to visit me to-day.

Having asked my guests to be seated, I immediately proceeded to the subject of their visit.

"I have thought very carefully over this matter," I said, "and perceive that it may be best in the end for us to come to a mutual arrangement, but I can only do so on the distinct understanding that if this explosive is completed it is not to be offered to a foreign nation, except in the event of the English Government refusing it. That is extremely unlikely, as, if it is perfected on the lines which I have sketched out in my mind, it will be too valuable for us as a nation to lose. I am willing, gentlemen," I continued, "to help you with my knowledge, provided you allow a proper legal document to be drawn up, in which each of us pledges the other that we will take no steps with regard to the use of the explosive or the surrendering our rights in it, but with the concurrence of all three. My lawyer can easily prepare such a document, and we will all sign it. On those terms and those alone I am willing to go with you."

Lewin looked by no means satisfied, but Kruse and his wife eagerly agreed to everything that I suggested.

"It is perfectly fair," said Mrs. Kruse, speaking in a bright, crisp voice; "we give you something—you give us something. When the explosive is complete we go shares in the matter. We are willing to sign the document you speak of. Is it not so, Carl?"

"Certainly," said her husband. "Mr. Gilchrist's terms are quite reasonable."

Lewin still remained silent.

"I have nothing else to suggest," I said, looking at him.

"Oh, I am in your hands," he said then; "the fact is, the thing that worries me is

having to offer this to England. I am not a patriot in any sense of the word, and I believe Germany would give us more for it."

"My terms are absolute," I repeated. "I am rather nearer to perfect discovery than you are, and the matter must drop, and we must both take our chances of being first in the field, if you do not agree to what I suggest."

"I am in your hands," repeated the man. "When the legal document is drawn up I am willing to sign it."

"And now," said Mrs. Kruse, coming forward and pushing back the fluffy hair from her forehead, "you will immediately arrange to come to us in Cornwall, will you not, Mr. Gilchrist?"

"Certainly," I replied, "and the sooner the better, for if this thing is to be completed, we have really no time to lose. I can go to Cornwall the day after to-morrow, and bring my lawyer's document with me."

"That will do, capitally," said Mrs. Kruse—"we ourselves go home to-night—we are greatly obliged to you. This is our address." She took out her card-case as she spoke, extracted a card, and hastily scribbled some directions on the back.

"Our place is called Castle Lewin," she said—"it is situated on the coast not far from Chrome Ash—the country around is very wild, but there is a magnificent view and some splendid cliffs. Your nearest station is Chrome Ash. Our carriage shall meet you there and bring you straight to Castle Lewin."

"You had best take an early train," said Lewin, "that is, if you want to arrive in time for dinner. A good train leaves Paddington at 5.50 in the morning. I am sorry we are asking you to undertake so long a journey."

"Pray do not mention it," I answered; "I am quite accustomed to going about the country, and think nothing of a few hours on the railway."

"We will expect you the day after to-morrow," said Mrs. Kruse; "we are greatly obliged to you. I am quite sure you will never repent of the kindness you are about to show us." She held out her hand frankly, her blue eyes looked full into mine. Again I was puzzled by an intangible likeness. Where, when, how had I met the gaze of those eyes before? My memory would not supply the necessary link. I took the hand she offered, and a few moments later my guests had left me alone.

I went out at once to consult my lawyer and to tell him of the curious occurrence

which had taken place. He promised to draw up the necessary document, and begged of me to be careful how far I gave myself away.

"There is no doubt that the men are enthusiastic scientists," I said. "It is plainly a case of give and take, and I believe I cannot do better than go shares with them in the matter."

Mr. Scrivener promised that I should have the terms of agreement in my possession that evening, and I returned home.

The next day I made further preparations for my Cornish visit, and on the following morning, at an early hour, took train from Paddington to Chrome Ash. The season of year was late October, and as I approached the coast I noticed that a great gale was blowing seawards. I am fond of Nature in her stormy moods, and as I had the compartment to myself, I opened the window and put out my head to inhale the breeze.

I arrived at Chrome Ash between five and six in the evening. Twilight was already falling and rain was pouring in torrents. It was a desolate little wayside station, and I happened to be the only passenger who left the train. A nicely appointed brougham and a pair of horses were waiting outside, and with her head poked out of the window, looking eagerly around, I saw the pretty face of Mrs. Kruse.

"Ah, you have come; that is good," she said. "I determined to meet you myself. Now, step in, won't you? I have brought the brougham, for the night is so wild. We have a long drive before us, over ten miles—I hope you won't object to my company."

I assured her to the contrary, and seated myself by her side. As I intended to return to town on the following day, I had only brought my suitcase with me. This was placed beside the driver, and we started off at a round pace in the direction of Castle Lewin.

To get to this out-of-the-way part of the country we had to skirt the coast, and the wind was now so high

that the horses had to battle against it. The roads were in many places unprotected, and less surefooted beasts might have been in danger of coming to grief as they rounded promontories and skirted suspicious-looking landslips.

The drive took over an hour, and long before we reached Castle Lewin darkness enveloped us. But at last we entered a long avenue, the horses dashed forward, the carriage made an abrupt turn, and I saw before me an old-fashioned, low house with a castellated roof and a tower at one end. We drew up before a deep porch, a manservant ran down some steps, flung open the door of the brougham, and helped Mrs. Kruse to alight.

"See that Mr. Gilchrist's luggage is taken to his room," she said, "and please tell your master and Mr. Lewin that we have returned. Come this way, please, Mr. Gilchrist."

She led me into a square and lofty hall, the walls of which were decorated with different trophies of the chase. The floor was of oak, slippery and dark with age, and although the evening was by no means cold, a fire burned on the hearth at one side of the room. The fire looked cheerful, and I stepped up to it not unwillingly.

"From the first of October to the first of May I never allow that fire to go out," said the young hostess, coming forward and rubbing her hands before the cheerful blaze. "This, as I have told you, Mr. Gilchrist, is a solitary place, and we need all the home comforts we can get. I am vexed that my husband is not in to receive you—but, ah! I hear him." She started and listened attentively.



"WE STARTED OFF AT A ROUND PACE."

A side door which I had not before noticed opened, and Kruse and his extraordinary dark companion both entered the room. They were accompanied by a couple of pointers, and were both dressed in thick jerseys and knickerbockers. Kruse offered me his hand in a calm, nonchalant manner, but Lewin, who could evidently never check his impetuosity, came eagerly forward, grasped my hand as if in a vice, and said, with emphasis :—

"We are much obliged to you, Mr. Gilchrist—welcome to Castle Lewin. I am sorry the night is such a bad one, or, late as it is, we might have had a walk round the place before dinner."

"No, no, Paul," said Mrs. Kruse, "you must not think of taking Mr. Gilchrist out again—he has had a long railway journey and a tiring drive, and would, I am sure, like to go to his room now to rest and dress for dinner."

"I will show you the way," said Kruse.

He took me up a low flight of stairs—we turned down a corridor, and he threw open the door of a pleasant, modern-looking bedroom. A fire blazed here also, the curtains were drawn at the windows, and the whole place looked cheery and hospitable. My host stepped forward, stirred up the fire to a more cheerful blaze, put on a log or two, and telling me that dinner would be announced by the sounding of a gong, left me to my own meditations.

I stood for a short time by the fire, and then proceeded to dress. By and-by the gong sounded through the house, and I went downstairs into the hall. The pointers were lying in front of the fire, and a great mastiff had now joined their company. The mastiff glanced at me out of two bloodshot eyes, and growled angrily as I approached. I am always fond of dogs, and, pretending not to notice the creature's animosity, patted him on his head. He looked up at me in some astonishment; his growls ceased; he rose slowly on his haunches, and not only received my caresses favourably, but even went the length of rubbing himself against my legs. At this moment Mrs. Kruse, in a pretty evening dress, tripped into the hall.

"Ah, there you are," she said, "and I see Demoniac has made friends with you. He scarcely ever does that with anyone."

At this instant Lewin and Kruse entered the hall. I gave my arm to Mrs. Kruse, and we went into the dining-room. During dinner the gale became more tempestuous, and Kruse and his wife entertained me with tales of shipwreck and disaster.

The cloth was removed, and an old

mahogany table, nearly black with age and shining like a looking-glass, reflected decanters of wine and a plentiful dessert.

"Pass the wine round," said Lewin. "Pray, Mr. Gilchrist, help yourself. I can recommend that port. It has been in bins at Castle Lewin since '47, and is mellow enough to please any taste."

So it was, being pale in colour and apparently mild and harmless as water. I drank a couple of glasses, but when the bottle was passed to me a third time, refused any more.

"I never exceed two glasses," I said, "and perhaps as we have a good deal to do and to see——"

"I understand," said Mrs. Kruse, who was still seated at the table. "We will have coffee brought to us in my husband's study; shall we go there now?" She rose as she spoke, and we followed her out of the room. We crossed the hall, where the fire still smouldered on the hearth, and entered a large, low-ceiled room at the opposite side. Here lamps were lit, and curtains drawn; the place looked snug and cheerful.

"We may as well look over your document before we repair to the laboratories, Mr. Gilchrist," said Kruse. "I gather from what you said in town that you do not care to impart any of your knowledge to us until we have signed the agreement."

"I have brought it with me," I answered; "with your permission I will go and fetch it."

I left the room, went up to my bedroom, took my lawyer's hastily-prepared agreement from its place in my suit-case, and returned to the study. As I did so, the following words fell upon my ears :—

"It will be the third cup, Carl—you will not forget?"

I could not hear Kruse's reply, but the words uttered by his wife struck on my ears for a fleeting moment with a sense of curiosity then I forgot all about them. The full meaning of that apparently innocent sentence was to return to me later.

Lewin, who was standing on the hearth with his hands behind him, motioned me to a chair. Mrs. Kruse sat down by the table she leant her elbows on it, revealing the pretty contour of her rounded arms, her eyes were bright, her cheeks slightly flushed—she certainly was a very pretty young woman; but now, as I gave her a quick, keen glance, I observed for the first time a certain hardness round the lines of her mouth, and also a steely gleam in the blue of her eyes which made me believe it just possible that she

might have another side to her character. As I looked at her she returned my gaze fully and steadily—then raising her voice she spoke with some excitement.

"Carl," she said, "Mr. Gilchrist is ready, and we have no time to lose. Remember that to-night, if all goes well, we perfect the great explosive. Now, then, to work."

"Here is the agreement," I said, taking the

breath seemed now and then to come from her body with a sort of pant.

"At this point we are stuck," said Kruse, pulling up short; "we have tried every known method, but we cannot overcome this difficulty."

"And for the success of the experiment," I interrupted, "it is almost an initial knowledge."

"Quite so, quite so," said Lewin.

"I can put you right," I said; "you are working with a wrong formula—you do not know, perhaps"—I then began to explain to them the action of a substance as yet

never used in the combination in which I had worked it. I was interrupted in my speech by Kruse.

"Anna," he said, "get paper. Write down slowly and carefully every word that Mr. Gilchrist says. Now, then, sir, we are ready to listen. Are you all right, Anna?"

"Quite," she answered.

I began to explain away the main difficulty. Mrs. Kruse wrote down my words one by one as they fell from my lips. Now and then she raised her eyes to question me, and her use of technical terms showed me that she was completely at home with the subject.

"By Jove! Why did we not think of that for ourselves?" said Lewin, interlarding his remark with a great oath.

"We are extremely obliged to you, Mr. Gilchrist," said Kruse. "This sweeps away every difficulty, the discovery is complete."

"Complete? I can scarcely believe it," said Mrs. Kruse.

At this moment the servant entered with coffee; it was laid on the table, and we each took a cup.

"You told me," I said, when I had drained off the contents of the tiny cup which had been presented to me, "that you have failed in this initial difficulty, and yet you have conquered in a matter which baffles me." I then named the point beyond which I could not get.

"Yes, we certainly know all about that," said Kruse.



"'HERE IS THE AGREEMENT,' I SAID."

lawyer's document out of its blue envelope—"will you kindly read it? We can then affix our signatures, and the matter is arranged."

Kruse was the first to read the document. I watched his eyes as they travelled with great speed over the writing. Then he drew up his chair to the table, and dipped his pen in ink preparatory to signing his signature.

"Hold a moment," I said; "we ought to call in a servant to witness this."

A slightly startled look flitted across Mrs. Kruse's face, but after an instant's hesitation she rose and rang the bell.

The footman appeared—he watched us as we put our names at the end of the paper, and then added his own signature underneath. When he had left the room Kruse spoke.

"Now that matter is settled," he said, "and we can set to work. You know, I think, Mr. Gilchrist, exactly how far we have gone." Here he produced his pocket-book and began to read aloud.

I listened attentively—Mrs. Kruse and Lewin stood near—I noticed that Mrs. Kruse breathed a little quicker than usual; her

"You will give me your information?"

"Of course, but the best way of doing so is by showing you the experiment itself."

"That will do admirably," I replied.

"If you are ready we will go now," said Mrs. Kruse.

She started up as she spoke, and led the way.

We left the study, and, going down some passages, found ourselves in the open air. We were now in a square yard, surrounded on all sides by buildings. Lewin walked first, carrying the lantern. Its light fell upon an object which caused me to start with surprise. This was nothing less than a balloon about twenty feet in diameter, which was tied down with ropes and securely fastened to an iron ring in the pavement. It swayed to and fro in the gusts of wind.

"Halloa!" I cried, in astonishment, "what is this?"

"Our favourite chariot," answered Mrs. Kruse, with a laugh. "Wait a moment, Paul, won't you? I want to show our balloon to Mr. Gilchrist. Is it not a beauty?" she added, looking in my face.

"I do not see any car," I replied.

"The car happens to be out of order. You do not know, perhaps, Mr. Gilchrist, that I am an accomplished aeronaut. I do not think I enjoy anything more than my sail in the air. It was only last Monday——"

"My dear Anna, if you get on that theme we shall not reach the laboratories to-night," interrupted her husband. "This way, please, Mr. Gilchrist."

He opened a door as he spoke, and I found myself in a large laboratory fitted up with the usual appliances.

Kruse and his companion, Lewin, began

to show me round, and Mrs. Kruse stood somewhere near the entrance.

The laboratory was full of a very disagreeable smell—Kruse remarked on this, and began to explain it away.

"We were making experiments until a late hour this afternoon," he said, "with some isocyanides, and as you are aware, the smell from such is almost overpowering, but we thought it would have cleared away by now."

"I hope you don't mind it?" said Lewin.

"I know it well, of course," I answered, "but it has never affected me as it does now. The fact is, I feel quite dizzy." As I spoke I reeled slightly and put my hand to my head.

"The smell is abominable," said Kruse. "Come to this side of the laboratory; you may be better if you get nearer the door."

I followed my host.

"What is the matter with you, Mr. Gilchrist?" said Mrs. Kruse, the moment she looked at my face.

"It is those fumes, my dear," said her husband, "they are affecting Mr. Gilchrist in a curious way—he says he feels quite dazed."

"I do," I answered.

"My head is giddy; it may be partly the long journey."

"Then I tell you what," said the wife, in an eager voice, "you shall not be worried with any more experiments to-night. The best thing you can do is to go straight to bed, and then in the morning the laboratory will be fresh and wholesome. Carl and Paul

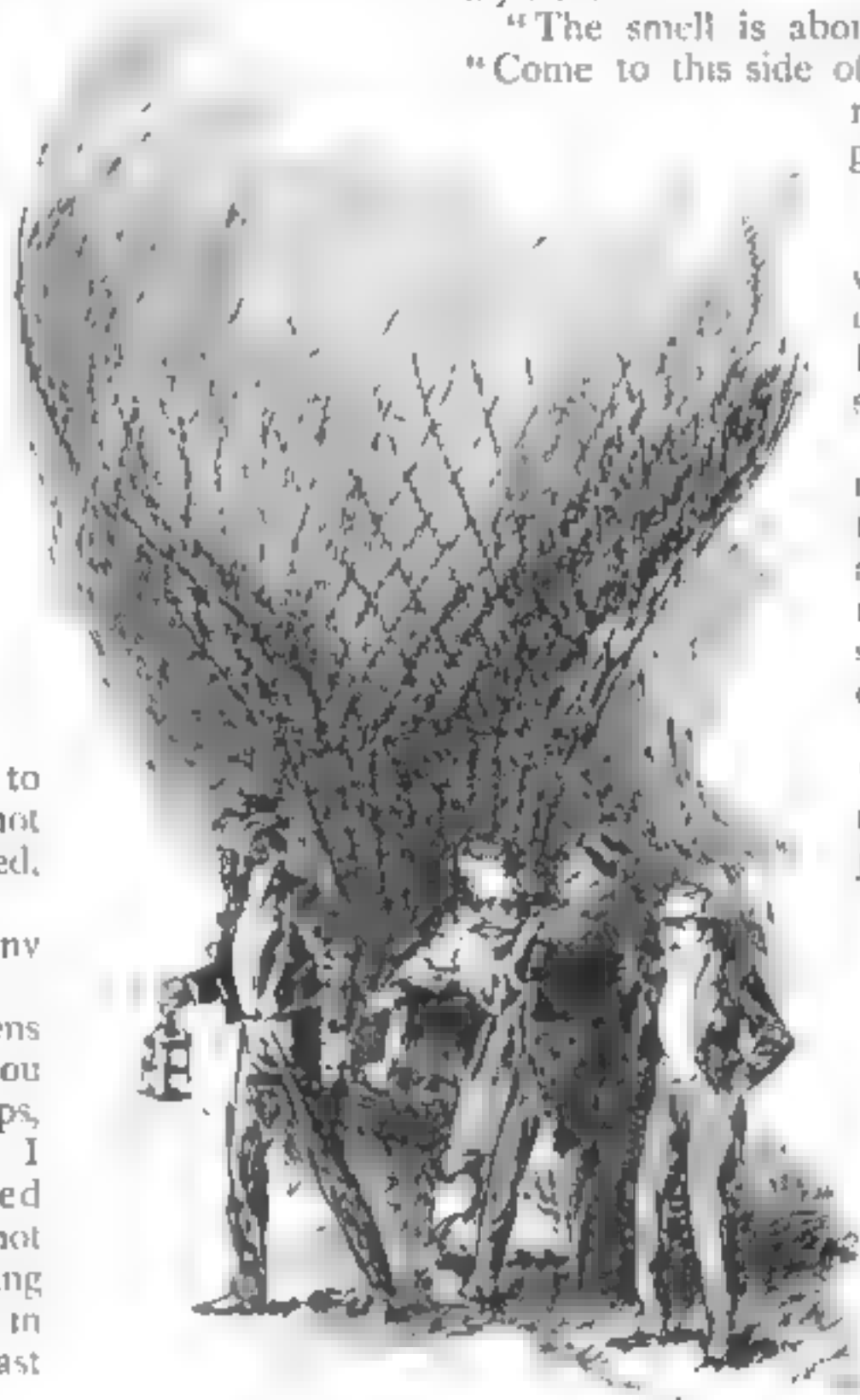
Lewin will experiment for you in the morning to your heart's content."

"Yes, really it is the best thing to do," said Kruse.

I sank down on a bench.

"I believe you are right," I said.

My sensations puzzled me not a little.



"HALLOA! WHAT IS THIS?"

When I entered the laboratory I was full of the keenest enthusiasm for the moment when Kruse and his companion should sweep away the last obstacle towards the perfecting of the grand explosive—now it seemed to me that I did not care whether I ever learned their secret or not. The explosive itself and all that it meant might go to the bottom of the sea as far as I was concerned. I only longed to lay my throbbing and giddy head on my pillow.

"I will take your advice," I said. "It is quite evident that in my tired state these fumes must be having a direct and poisoning effect upon me."

"Come with me," said Kruse; "you must not stay a moment longer in this place."

I bade Mrs. Kruse and Lewin good-night, and Kruse, conducting me through the yard where the balloon was fastened, took me to my bedroom. The fire burned here cheerfully—the bed was turned down, the snowy sheets and befluffed pillows seemed to invite me to repose. I longed for nothing more in all the world than to lay my head on my pillow.

"Good-night," said Kruse—he held out his hand, looking fixedly at me as he spoke. The next moment he had left the room.

I sank into a chair when he was gone, and thought as well as I could of the events of the evening, but my head was in such a whirl that I found I could not think consecutively. I threw off my coat and, without troubling to undress, lay down and fell into a deep and dreamless slumber.

"Have you got the hydrogen and chlorine ready?"

These words, whispered rapidly, fell upon my ears with distinctness. They did not disturb me, for I thought they were part of a dream; I had a curious unwillingness to open my eyes or to arouse myself—an unaccountable lethargy was over me, but I felt neither frightened nor unhappy. I knew that I was on a visit to Lewin and Kruse in Cornwall, and I believed myself to be lying on the bed where I had fallen into such heavy slumber some hours ago. I felt that I had slept very deeply, but I was unwilling to awake yet, or stir in any way. It is true I heard people bustling about, and presently a vessel of some kind fell to the floor with a loud clatter. A woman's voice said, "Hush, it will arouse him," and then a man made a reply which I could not catch. My memory went on working calmly and steadily. I recalled how the evening had been passed—the signing of

the document—the balloon in the yard, the horrible smell in the laboratory. Then I remembered as if I heard them over again Mrs. Kruse's words when I returned to the study, "*It will be the third cup.*" What did she mean? Why should I be bothered with this small memory now? I never wanted to sleep as I did at this moment—I had never felt so unaccountably, so terribly drowsy.

"I hope that noise did not wake him," said a voice which I knew was no echo of memory, but a real voice—I recognised it to be that of Mrs. Kruse.

"He is right enough," replied her husband. "I gave you enough *narcaine* to put into his coffee to finish off a stronger and a bigger man—don't worry. Yes, Lewin, I will help you in a moment to carry him into the yard."

"The storm is getting less," said Mrs. Kruse. "Be quick. Oh, surely he is dead!" she added.

"If not dead, all but," replied her husband. "I tell you I gave him a stiff dose—he never moved nor uttered a sigh when we took him from his bedroom."

Lethargic as I undoubtedly was, these last words had the effect of making me open my eyes. I did so, blinking with the stupor which was oppressing me. I stared vacantly round me. Where was I?—what had happened? My limbs felt as if weighted with lead, and I now experienced for the first time since I had heard the voices an unaccountable difficulty in stirring them. I tried to raise my hand, and then I was conscious of a hideous pang—the knowledge flashed across me that I was bound hand and foot. I was, then, the victim of foul play—but, good God! what? What awful discovery had I just made? My memory was becoming quite active, but my whole body felt numbed and dulled into a lethargy which almost amounted to paralysis. Making a great effort, I forced myself to turn my head. As I did so a woman's face peered down into mine. It was the face of my hostess, Mrs. Kruse. She turned quickly away.

"He is not dead," I heard her whisper; "he is coming to."

At that moment I knew where I was—I was lying on the floor of the laboratory. How had I got there—what was about to happen? I found my voice.

"For God's sake, what is the matter?" I cried; "where am I? Is that you, Mrs. Kruse? What has happened?"

The moment I spoke, Mrs. Kruse stepped behind me, so that, bound as I was, I could no longer see her face or figure. The light

in the laboratory was very dim, and just then the huge form of Lewin came between me and it. He bent over me, and, putting his hand under my shoulders, lifted me to a sitting posture—at the same moment Kruse took hold of my feet. In that fashion, without paying the slightest attention to my words, they carried me into the yard where the balloon was fastened. The contact with the open air immediately made me quite wide awake, and a fear took possession of me which threatened to rob me of my reason.

"What are you doing? Why am I bound in this fashion? Why don't you speak?" I cried.

They were dumb, as though I had not uttered a word. I struggled madly, writhing in my bonds.

"Mrs. Kruse," I cried out, "I know you are there. As you are a woman, have mercy; tell me what this unaccountable thing means. Why am I tied hand and foot? If you really mean to kill me, for God's sake put me out of my misery at once."

"Hold your tongue, or I'll dash your brains out," said the ruffian Lewin. "Anna, step back. Now, Carl, bring the ropes along."

As the brute spoke he flung me with violence upon a plank, which ran across the iron hoop to which the meshes of the great balloon were attached. I struggled to free myself, but in my bound condition was practically powerless.

"What are you doing? Speak; tell me the worst," I said. I was gasping with terror, and a cold sweat had burst out in every pore.

"If you want to know the worst, it is this: you are going to carry your secret to the stars," said Lewin. "Not another word, or I'll put an end to you on the spot."

As he spoke he and his companion began to lash me firmly to the plank. My hands, which

were already tied together round the wrists, were drawn up over my head and fastened securely by means of a rope to one end of the plank; my feet were secured in a similar manner to the other. Just at this instant a sudden bright flash of lightning lit up the yard, and I caught sight of a large dumb-bell-shaped glass flask, and also what appeared to be a tin canister. These Kruse held in his hand and proceeded, with Lewin's assistance, to fasten round the *outer* side of the plank, just under where I was lying. They were kept in their places by an iron chain. As soon as this operation was over Lewin began to slash away at the ropes which kept the balloon in the yard. I now found myself lying stretched out flat, unable to move a single inch, staring up at the great balloon which towered above me. It was just at that supreme moment of agony, amid the roaring of the gale, that Mrs. Kruse, coming softly behind me, whispered something in my ear.

"I give you one chance," she said; "the loop which binds your hands to the plank is single." She said nothing more, but stepped back.

The next instant, amid a frightful roar of thunder, the balloon was lifted from its moorings and shot up into the night. As it



cleared the buildings the full force of the gale caught it, and I felt myself being swept up with terrible velocity into the very heart of the storm. Blinding flashes of lightning played around me on every side, while the peals of thunder merged into one continuous, deafening roar. Up and up I flew, with the wind screaming through the meshes of the net-work and threatening each moment to tear the balloon to fluttering ribbons. Then, almost before I was aware of it, I found myself gazing up at a wonderful, star-flecked firmament, and was drifting in what seemed to be a breathless calm. I heard the thunder pealing away below me, and was conscious of bitter cold. The terrible sense of paralysis and inertia had now, to a great extent, left me, and my reason began to re-assert itself. I was able to review the whole situation. I not only knew where I was, but I also knew what the end must be.

"Hydrogen and chlorine," I muttered to myself. "The dumb-bell-shaped glass vessel which is fastened under the plank contains, without doubt, these two gases, and the tin canister which rests beneath them is full of nitro-glycerine." Yes, I knew what this combination meant. *When the first glint of the sun's rays struck upon the glass vessel it would be instantly shattered. The nitro-glycerine would explode by the concussion, and the balloon and I myself would be blown into impalpable dust beyond sight or sound of the earth.*

This satanic scheme for my destruction had been planned by the fiends in human shape who had lured me to Cornwall. Having got my secret from me, they meant to destroy all trace of my existence. The deadly poison of narceine had been introduced into my coffee. I knew well the action of that pernicious alkaloid, and now perceived that the smell in the laboratory had nothing whatever to do with my unaccountable giddiness and terrible inertia. Narceine would, in short, produce all the symptoms from which I had suffered, and would induce so sound and deadly a sleep that I could be moved from my bed without awakening. Yes, the ruffians had made their plans carefully, and all had transpired according to their wishes. There was absolutely no escape for me. With insane fury I tore at my bonds. The ropes only cut into the flesh of my hands, that was all.

The storm had now passed quite out of hearing, and I found myself in absolute stillness and silence. I was sailing away to my death at the dawn of day. So awful were the

emotions in my breast that I almost wished that death would hasten in order to end my sufferings. Why had not the hydrogen and chlorine exploded when I was passing through the storm? Why had the lightning not been merciful enough to hurry my death? Under ordinary circumstances they would certainly have combined if they had been subjected to so much actinic light. I could not account for my escape, until I suddenly remembered that in all probability the stop-cock between the two gases in the dumb-bell-shaped glass had only been turned just when the balloon was sent off, in which case the gases would not have had time to diffuse properly for explosion.

At the dawn of day the deadly work would be complete. The question now was this — how long had I to live, and was there any possible means of escape?

The action of the drug had now nearly worn off, and I was able to think with acuteness and intelligence. I recalled Mrs. Kruse's strange parting words, "The loop which binds your hands to the plank is single." What did she mean? After all, it was little matter to me how I was bound, for I could not stir an inch. Nevertheless, her words kept returning to me, and suddenly as I pondered over them I began to see a meaning. The loop was single. This, of course, meant that the cord was only passed once round the rope straps which secured my wrists together. I nearly leapt as I lay upon my hard and cruel bed, for at this instant a vivid memory returned to me. Years ago I had exposed a spiritualist who had utilized a similar contrivance to deceive his audience. His wrists had been firmly tied together, and then a single loop was passed between them, and fastened to a beam above his head. He had been able to extricate himself by means of a clever trick. I knew how he had done it. Was it possible that my murderous hosts had tied my hands to the plank in a similar manner? If so, notwithstanding their sharpness, what an oversight was theirs!

In desperate excitement I began to work the cord between my wrists up and up between my palms until I could just reach it with my little finger, and by a supreme effort slipped it over my left hand. Great God, I was free! I could now move my hands, although they were still tightly tied together round the wrists. In frantic despair I began to tug and tear at the cords which bound them. Cutting hard with my teeth, I at last managed to liberate my hands, and then my next intention was to unfasten the horrible

explosive from the plank. Here, however, I was met by what seemed to be an insuperable difficulty. The glass vessel and the tin canister had been secured round the plank by means of a chain, which was lashed in such a manner that by no possible means could I undo it. I was now free to move, but the means of destruction were still close to me. How long had I before the sun would rise? Even now the light in the heavens was getting stronger and stronger. What should I do? My hands were free and I could sit up. In another moment I had managed to untie the cords from my legs. And then, with many a slip and struggle, I contrived to clamber up the network till I came to the balloon itself, when I set to work to tear at the silk with my nails and teeth like a man possessed. After almost superhuman efforts, I managed to make a very small hole in the silk. This I enlarged first with my finger and then with my whole hand, tearing away the silk in doing so till I had made a huge rent in the side of the balloon.

As soon as this happened, I knew that the balloon would slowly, but surely, begin to descend. The question now was this: how soon would the sun rise? Perhaps in an hour, but I thought sooner. The murderous explosive was so secured to the plank that there was not the smallest chance of my getting rid of it. My one and only chance of life was to reach the ground before the sun got up. If this did not happen, I should be blown to atoms.

The stars were already growing faint in the heavens, and, sitting on the plank, holding the meshes of the balloon on either side, I ventured to look below me. I saw, with a slight feeling of relief, that the wind must have changed, for, instead of being blown seawards, as was doubtless the intention of my murderers, I had gone a considerable way inland. I

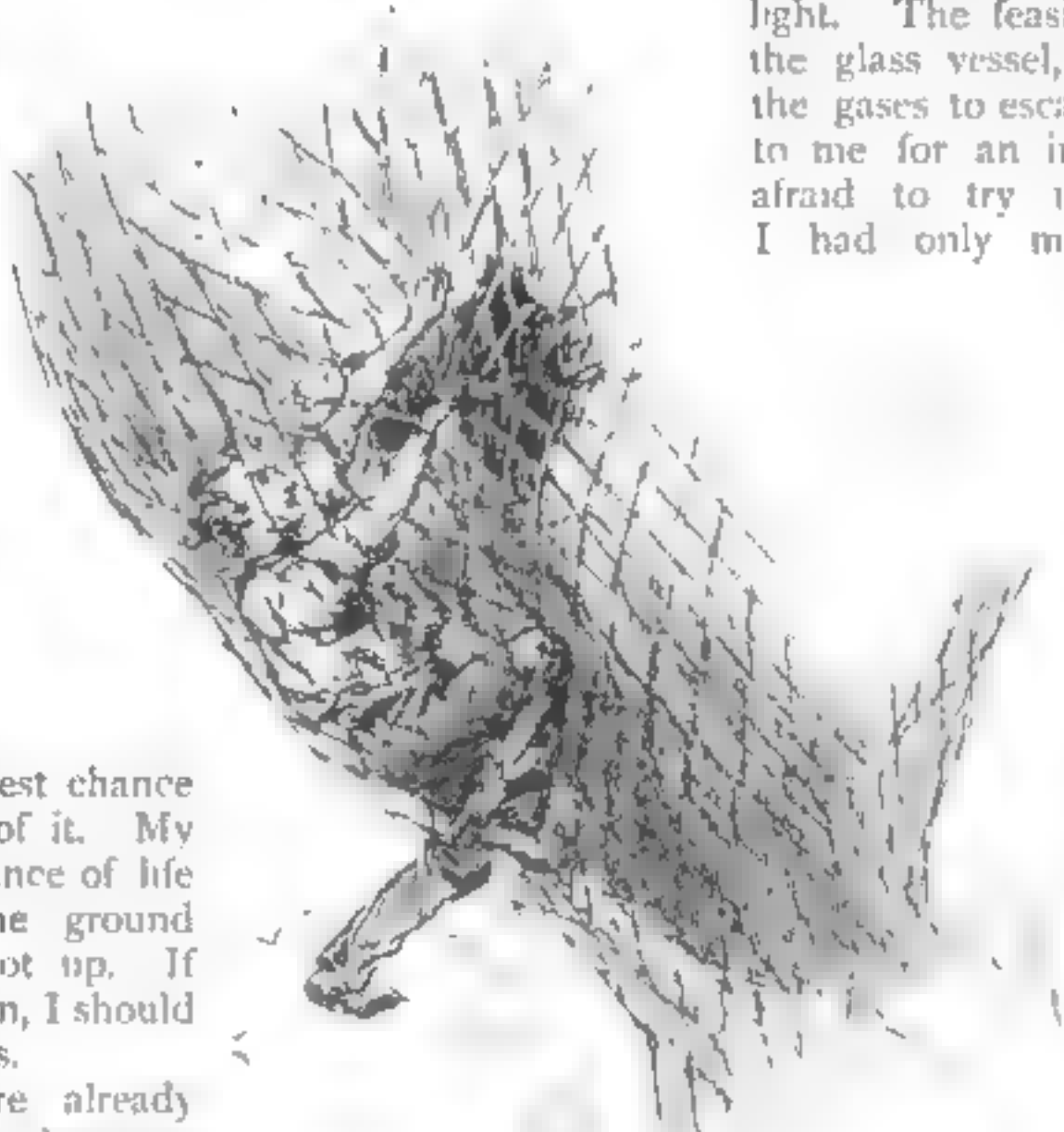
could see objects, trees, villages, solitary houses dotted in kaleidoscope pattern beneath me—it seemed to me as I gazed that the world was coming up to meet me. Each moment the trees, the houses, assumed more definite shape. Within a quarter of an hour I saw that I was only about six hundred feet from a large park into which I was descending.

A grey, pearly tint was now over everything—this, moment by moment, assumed a rose hue. I knew by past experience that in five minutes at the farthest the sun would rise, and striking its light across the glass vessel would hurl me into eternity. In an agony of mind, I once more directed all my attention to the terrible explosive. I knew that in this fearful race between me and the sun, the sun must win unless I could do something—but, what? That was the question which haunted me to the verge of madness. I was without my coat, having been lashed on to the plank in my shirt, or I might have tried to cover

the dumb-bell glass from the fatal light. The feasibility of breaking the glass vessel, and so allowing the gases to escape, also occurred to me for an instant, but I was afraid to try it—first, because I had only my fists to break

it with; and second, if I did, the blow might explode the nitro-glycerine. Suddenly I uttered a shout which was almost that of a crazy person. What a fool I was not to have noticed it before—there *was* a means of deliverance. By no possible method could I unfasten the iron chain which secured the infernal machine to the plank, but the plank itself might be un-

shipped. I observed that it was secured to the iron hoop by thick and clumsy knots of rope. With all the speed I could muster, for seconds were now precious, I gently worked the chain



"I MADE A HUGE RENT IN THE SIDE OF THE BALLOON."

along the plank till it and the infernal machine had reached one end. I noticed with joy that here the chain was loose, as the plank was thinner. Seating myself on the hoop and clinging to the meshes with one hand, I tore and tugged away at the knots which secured the plank with the other. Merciful God! they were giving way! In another instant the plank fell, hanging to the hoop at the opposite side, and as it did so, the infernal machine slipped from the free end and fell.

I was now within 300ft. of the earth, and, clinging for bare life to the meshes of the balloon, I looked below. There was a sudden flash and a deafening roar. In mid-air, as it fell, the machine exploded, for the sun had just risen. In another moment my feet had brushed the top of a huge elm tree, and I found myself close to the ground. Seizing the opportunity of open space I sprang from the balloon, falling heavily on the wet grass.

The instant I left it, the balloon, relieved from my weight, shot up again into space, and was lost to view behind the trees. I watched it disappear, and then consciousness forsook me.

I was picked up by a game-keeper, who conveyed me to his own cottage, where I was well and carefully nursed, for the exposure and

shock which I had undergone induced a somewhat severe illness. When the fever which had rendered me delirious abated, my memory came fully back, and I was able to give a faithful and circumstantial account of what had occurred to a neighbouring magistrate. Immediately on hearing my story, the superintendent of police in London was telegraphed to, and a detachment of his men went to Castle Lewin, but they found the place absolutely deserted. My would-be murderers had beyond doubt received news of my miraculous escape and had decamped.

I have only one thing more to say. On my return to London, amongst a pile of letters which awaited me, was one which I could not peruse without agitation; it ran as follows:—

"You acted on my hint, and have escaped truly as if by a miracle. We are about to leave the country, and you will in all probability never hear anything of us again. But it gives me pleasure even in this crucial moment to let you know how easily you can be duped. Have you ever guessed how we got possession of that secret which was all yours and never ours?

Do you recall the lady who, dressed as a nun, came to see you about six or seven months ago? You believed her story, did you not? May I give you one word of warning? In future, do not leave your alphabetically arranged note-books in a room to which strangers may possibly have access. Farewell."



"I SPRANG FROM THE BALLOON"

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX, M.D.

VIII.—THE MAN WHO SMILED.



HE *Crocodile* was one of the finest of the P. and O. steamers, and I had secured a comfortable deck cabin. I was on my way to India, partly in search of rest and refreshment, partly to renew my acquaintance with certain tribes in the Central Provinces, whom I used to know in my early days of adventure. They possessed some marvellous remedies for snake bites, wounds, and other casualties. These were, I was quite persuaded, unknown to the British pharmacopœia, and I hoped to beguile some of their most valuable secrets from them. We had just passed Gibraltar, and the ill-fated Bay of Biscay lay behind us. Favoured by a soft, southerly breeze, we were most of us on deck, and enjoying ourselves after our various fashions, when, as I stood in the neighbourhood of the companion-way, the following words fell on my ears:—

"I can find you a comfortable corner on the hurricane-deck, Lil, where we shall be quite alone."

"I would rather not go," was the quick reply. "I expect Mrs. Sully up every moment from her cabin. She has a great deal to tell me about Bombay. Her house at Breach Candy must be magnificent—and—why, what is the matter, Dick?"

"Nothing that I know of," was the reply, sulkily uttered, and a tall man walked quickly past me to the other side of the boat.

I knew who he was, although up to the present I had not made his acquaintance. His name was Farquharson—he had a good appointment in the Civil Service at Bombay, and was taking his bride out with him. The bride in question was a pretty, bright, somewhat nervous-looking young girl. She was so gay, and her laughter so infectious, that she made a complete foil to her husband, who was about the most morose-looking man I had ever had the pleasure of seeing. His conversation, however, was genial enough, and I often heard people laugh as they listened to him; but his face, with the eyes full of gloom, the tense mouth, firmly and immovably set, the long, cadaverous cheeks, the surly set of the chin, was enough to depress anyone. I could not help at times

marvelling why his pretty young wife had married him.

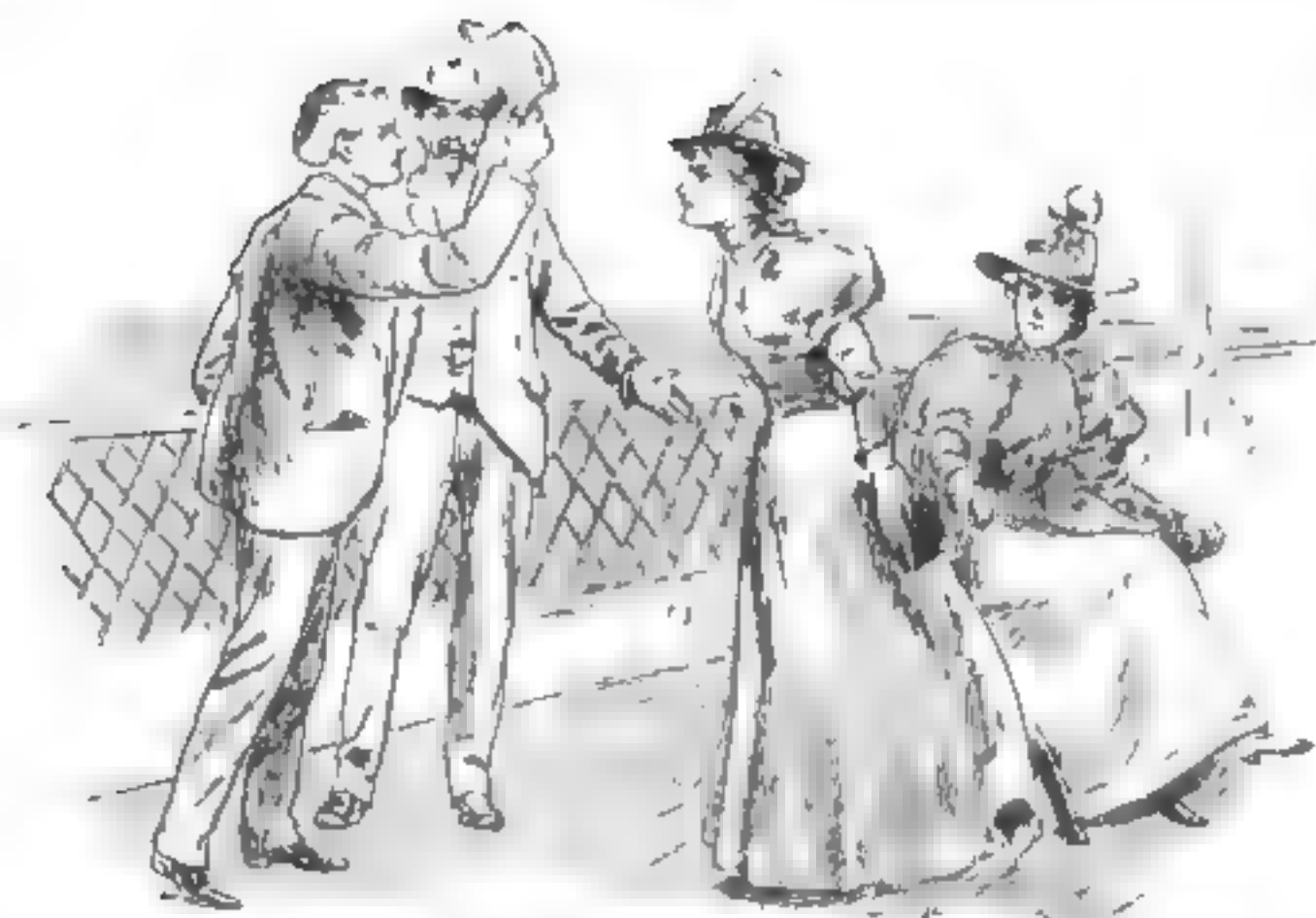
When he moved out of sight now, she sat down on her accustomed deck chair. I moved off, and presently found myself close to Farquharson, who was standing near the rail of the hurricane-deck smoking a cigar and looking moodily out across the waves. When he saw me he made an observation with regard to the weather in a friendly manner, and then, still keeping his back slightly towards me, entered into a brisk and animated conversation. We discovered, as so many people do on board ship, that we had mutual friends. He told me a little about his history, which seemed to be in every way unremarkable, and finally proposed that he should introduce me to his wife. We went round to the part of the deck where Mrs. Farquharson was seated. When she observed us approaching, I noticed that her quick, bright eyes sought her husband's face with an eager look, expressive of apprehension and even of fear. This look, which passed as quickly as it came, puzzled me, but I had no time to dwell upon it then. Farquharson went up to her and introduced me in a brisk tone.

"Mr. Gilchrist, Lil. He happens to know the Farrants—you will like to hear him talk about them, I am sure."

"I shall be charmed," was the bright reply. Mrs. Farquharson stood up as she spoke and began to ask eager questions—the Farrants were some of her greatest friends, she had not met them for years. How were they getting on?—when had I last met them? As she spoke her face became full of vivacity, the eyes were as I had seen them half an hour ago, bright and shining, she laughed, and smiles accompanied each word.

"What a contrast this pretty girl is to her husband," I could not help inwardly remarking.

As we talked together I noticed that Farquharson watched her. He was standing in such a position that he could only see her profile. When her merry laughter floated past him I wondered that he did not smile in response. I began even to think his an unpleasant face, not only on account of its melancholy, but because of the queer reserve



MRS. FARQUHARSON STOOD UP AS SHE SPOKE.

or tension, which kept each feature more or less fixed. But for the eyes, which were dark, bright, and lively enough, it might have been characterized as wooden.

The following evening, just when the dusk was falling, a light hand touched me on my sleeve. I turned round and saw, to my astonishment, Mrs. Farquharson standing near me.

"I know you are surprised," she said, "but please will you walk up and down with me?—I want to say something—I am—a little frightened."

"What about?" I asked.

"Hush!" she answered. She looked behind her. "He did not notice that I came on deck," she said, in a tone of relief. "Let us walk just here. Talk to me about anything or nothing, only keep talking."

"But you have not told me what has frightened you."

She glanced again behind her and then bent towards me.

"I am afraid of Dick," she said. "I think he must be a little mad."

"Oh, nonsense," I answered. "he is as sane as you or I."

"You would not say so if you knew every thing."

"But what has he done?" I asked.

"He has done nothing, only looked *like a devil*." Here her voice shook. "He has looked like the Arch Fiend himself. Oh, the sight was horrible! I cannot live through it if he does it again."

Her agitation was all too real, and, believing it to be a case of nerves, I tried to turn

the conversation to indifferent matters.

"Don't," she said, in a piteous voice; "I must speak of it to someone, and you are the only friend I have on board. I believe my secret is safe with you?"

"If you really wish me to help you, you must be more explicit," I said. "Remember, you have not yet told me what has frightened you."

She laid her soft hand on my arm, and then withdrew it.

"I am frightened," she said, "because

Dick looked like a devil—it was his smile—oh, Heaven!" She shuddered from head to foot.

"Now that I come to think of it, I have never seen your husband smile," I said. "I have been struck from time to time with the extreme taciturnity of his face."

"I am not surprised. You cannot have failed to notice his melancholy. Well, he is not really sad. I used to think so at first, but after we were engaged, and when we were first married, I knew by the things he said that he had a contented, even cheerful, mind. I like his gravity—it is his smile which upsets me—I cannot love him if he smiles at me; and as to his laugh, once I heard it. Mr. Calchrist, if I hear it again I shall go mad."

"But you cannot expect your husband never to smile, nor to laugh," I said. "It is your duty to be severe with yourself, and not to allow such trivial matters to influence you."

"You would not say so if you knew," she replied. She paused, as if considering.

"Will you take a message from me to my husband?" she asked. She told me what to say.

"You place a very hard task upon me, Mrs. Farquharson. No man would like to hear the things you beg me to tell your husband; to hear them from your lips would be hard, but from those of a stranger—"

"Never mind," she said, eagerly; "the case is unique, terrible. Someone must help me—you will do it, will you not? I would not ask you to take my part if I had another friend on board."

She looked so beseeching, so young, so terrified, that I could not help yielding.

"Very well, I will do what I can for you," I said.

"Thank you, from my heart," she answered. She held out her hand.

I took it in mine. The next moment she disappeared in the direction of the companion-way.

The electric light was now switched on, and the deck looked bright and animated. Awnings had been drawn overhead to keep out some of the night air, and couples began to appear from every quarter, talking, laughing, strolling up and down. A string band made excellent music, and I heard a girl propose dancing.

I stood leaning against the rail in exactly the position in which Mrs. Farquharson had left me. I by no means liked the task she had forced upon me, but my impression was that she herself was ill, and that it might be only a kindness to warn her husband with regard to her condition. Presently I saw his melancholy, taciturn face towering above the smaller men as he came on deck. I watched him look round, and I doubted not that he was expecting his wife to join him each moment. By-and-by Farquharson strolled over in the direction where I was standing.

"Halloa!" he said, "I did not know you had come up."

"I have been here for some time," I replied. "It is a beautiful night."

"But stifling under this awning," he said. As he spoke I saw him glance in the direction of the companion-way.

"You are looking for Mrs. Farquharson?" I said. "She has just been here, but has gone below."

"Have you spoken to her?" he inquired.

"Yes. She asked me to give you a message."

He did not inquire what it was, but looked me steadily in the face.

"She is not quite well," I continued.

"You will, I hope, forgive my interfering. I am not a medical man, but I know a good bit about medical matters, and I cannot help telling you that you ought to be very careful with regard to your wife."

Just for a moment he looked as if he meant to resent my intrusive remarks, but then his brow cleared.

"You spoke of Mrs. Farquharson having left a message for me. What is it?" he asked.

"It is important. Can we get away by ourselves?"

"Of course we can. The lower deck will be empty."

We moved off at once, and soon found ourselves in comparative solitude. The music played in the distance, the lapping sound of the waves came to our ears; we had got outside the awning, and the stars shone brightly overhead. It was a



"WILL YOU TAKE A MESSAGE?"

lovely evening, tropical in its heat.

Farquharson drew a long breath and took off his hat.

"It is a comfort to get away from all that gossip and banality," he said; "but you spoke of a message from my wife. Will you kindly tell me what she has said?"

"I will do so, but first please let me repeat that I consider Mrs. Farquharson extremely nervous. She came to me a short time ago and confessed that she was frightened."

"Good heavens! Frightened!" cried Farquharson. He drew himself up stiffly and stood like a soldier at attention.

"And about a most extraordinary matter," I continued. "It seems that you have alarmed her. She said that she could not stand your smile. Of course, it is merely a case of nerves—but what is the matter? You don't look well."

"My smile?" said Farquharson. "Believe me, I never knew that I smiled; I hoped that I had not inflicted it on her. This is terrible. Poor girl—no wonder she is upset."

"It is a case of nerves," I said, misunder-

standing him. "Mrs. Farquharson needs a tonic and a little care and watching."

"She does not," he answered.

"I am sure of it," I said. "Such a state as hers is not altogether uncommon."

He interrupted me with a harsh sound.

"Believe me, there is nothing whatever the matter with her," he said; "she only failed to endure what no woman in her senses could stand. I see, Gilchrist, that I must give you my confidence, and believe me, it is a horrible one. I had no right to marry that young girl. I was tempted, for I loved her, God knows how deeply. Still, I behaved like a selfish brute, and this is my just punishment."

To my amazement, the man was so overcome that great drops stood out on his forehead. All the time there was not a trace of expression in the face, the lips looked straight and fixed, each feature was as if carved in wood, yet one glance at the eyes told me that he was suffering torture.

"You have never come across a case like mine," he began. "I consider myself the most afflicted man in the world. Now, come here, just under this light—but first tell me, can you stand a shock?"

"What do you mean?"

"Are your nerves good? Can you stand something horrible?"

"I believe so," I answered, "I have had some tough seasoning."

He kept gazing at me as if he meant to read me through and through.

"My wife has explained to you that she dreads my smile," he said, at last; "the best way to show you why she dreads it is by illustrating it."

I did not speak. He continued, after another pause:

"Some people wonder at my grave, immovable face. As far as I am concerned, they may wonder in vain. For you I lift the curtain."

Suddenly his whole face underwent a complete revolution—the mouth was stretched wide, and literally seemed to open from ear to ear, showing his glittering, white teeth. The short hair on the forehead was brought down until it reached the eyebrows, and at the same time, by some extraordinary spasm of muscle,

the lower eyelids were everted, and the eyeballs rolled up until there was nothing visible but the whites. In this horrible contortion, which partook of the idiot and the monkey in its extreme horror, the real Farquharson completely vanished. Uttering a groan as his features recovered their normal attitude, the man turned aside and covered his face.

It was enough. I had seen something which caused my heart, accustomed as it was to shocks and adventures, to leap within my breast. A cold horror covered me. I had truly seen what might have been the face of a fiend.

"Man," I said, catching him by the arm, "what in the world do you mean?"

"I have illustrated my smile," he said. "That is the only way in which I can smile. Horrible, is it not?"



WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU MEAN?

"It is," I answered. "Fearfully so."

"As we are about it, Gilchrist, I will give you a further shock. Now, listen to my laugh steady yourself, for the sound will not be pleasing."

He gave a sort of chuckle, low and deep at first, and resembling, to a certain extent, the baying of a bloodhound; but, as the laugh proceeded, it rose in strength and sound, until it at last resembled certain strings of the bass fiddle played in absolute discord. It came and went, rising in volume, until the agonized sense of every nerve jarred caused the listener to clap his hands to his ears.

I have heard madmen laugh before now, and have listened to the jackal in the jungle, but I never, from man or beast, was greeted by such a sound of horror as proceeded from Farquharson's lips.

"Now you know my secret," he said, resuming his usual automatic manner and immovable cast of face. "Let us walk up and down."

"But why do you do it?" I said.

"Because I cannot help myself. As a child, I am told that I was all right, but when very young I had a bad fall off a pony and had concussion of the brain. From that moment the horrible thing came upon me slowly but surely. I was taken to many doctors, but no one could help me, the general supposition being that I received some grave injury to the cerebral centres when I fell from my pony; at least, that was the understood pathology of my condition. One or two doctors said that it was caused by shock, and one man was sufficiently hopeful to hint that another and greater shock might possibly restore me—but that kind of thing cannot be done to order, and my case is without doubt incurable. Now, Gilchrist, the tragedy of the thing is this—that smile and laugh have nothing whatever to do with me: within I am like all other men. I am not the monster my smile would show and my laugh prove. I can love deeply, and I can be stirred to noble thoughts. No woman was ever better loved than my wife is loved by me. While I live I shall love her, and even if"—his voice faltered and broke—"Whatever happens, my love will remain unalterable," he continued. "For years I have trained myself never to smile, never to laugh—even the ordinary powers of expression are impossible to me, for the slightest movement of my face causes an intolerable grimace. Before we were married Lil often remarked on the immobility of my face, but I put her off the subject with tender words, and she learned to love me in spite of my ugly exterior. I often felt that I ought to tell her the truth, but the fear, the terror, that I should lose her kept me silent. I believed that she might safely marry me, for I resolved to be always on my guard. You can little imagine the torture of such a state. It is my lot to see humour with startling quickness, and my whole life is spent in a state of terror, fearing that I may indulge in the smile or laugh which would drive those mad who observed them. I am never quite at my ease except when the light is dim; and, although I may allow myself to change my expression then, and

even smile fearlessly, I have still to guard against laughter. I perceive that in an unexpected moment I betrayed myself to Lil. She is horrified, and little wonder. The stoutest nerves could not stand the infliction of such sounds and such looks as I can give."

"You are right," I replied.

"You have never seen anything worse?"

He looked at me with his immovable eyes, but I caught the pathos in his tone.

"It is a remarkable case," I said. "I earnestly wish it could be cured."

"That can never be—I must endure my burden, from which death alone can free me—but the immediate question now is, what is to become of my wife?"

"Tell her what you have just told me," I answered. "She loves you well and will learn to endure it."

"She cannot—you have said so yourself."

"You must be careful to inflict the pain upon her as seldom as possible."

"I have learned to be careful, but she knows now that the horror exists, and will watch for it. I shall become nervous; with her eyes watching me, I shall act the devil in spite of myself."

I did not know what reply to make. The case was all too tragic. Here was a man who must carry what was practically almost a dead face about with him: a man with keen wit, warm affections, even that last torture to one circumstanced as he was, a vivid sense of humour. He had married a young wife whose nerves were highly strung, and who had already discovered his secret.

We continued to walk up and down. Farquharson was now perfectly silent. The music came to us in waves of cheerful sound across the great ship. He suddenly stamped his foot.

"What an irony that music is beside a tragedy like mine," he exclaimed.

"Listen to me," I said, suddenly. "I grant that it is a tragedy, but I am certain there must be a way out of it. In the first place, I do not despair of your not being finally cured; but even granted that never takes place, you need not lose your wife's affections. The thing for you now to do is to tell Mrs. Farquharson the truth."

"How can I tell her? Remember, I cannot plead with eyes, voice, and expression like other people."

"She loves you," I said. "She loves you for what you are, not for what you look. She is, if I mistake not, possessed of nerve if she will only dare to use it—she can get accustomed to your condition."

"Never, never."

"I believe she can. Anyhow, let us try her—I will tell her, if you like. Will you allow me?"

"God bless you," said the poor fellow; "it would be an untold relief."

I went downstairs at once and entered one of the saloons. It was empty. I sent a servant to ask Mrs. Farquharson to come to me.

She came almost immediately; her eyes were red as if she had been crying, her face was pale.

"I have something to tell you," I said; "won't you sit down?"

"I cannot," she replied; "have you spoken to Dick?"



"Yes, and he has told me everything."

"Then he *is* mad?" She leant against a chair, trembling.

"He is as sane as you are; but all the same, it is a terrible story—it lies in your power alone to make it endurable to him."

I then related as briefly as I could the tragedy which I had just heard from Farquharson's lips. Mrs. Farquharson listened in absolute silence. When I had concluded she held out her hand to me.

"Thank you," she said, briefly. "I have nothing more to say. I believe I can do

what—he requires. I am going to him." She left the saloon and went on deck.

I did not see either of the Farquharsons again that night.

The rest of the voyage took place without anything special occurring, and when a couple of weeks later we reached Bombay, Farquharson and his wife came to bid me good-bye. I noticed that her face was pale, but her eyes had a brisk, resolved sort of look about them. She spoke cheerfully.

"You must come and see us, Mr. Gilchrist," she said. "Dick has a pretty house at Breach Candy—I shall be very proud if you will be one of our first guests."

I said I would call upon them, and it was arranged that I should dine at their house on the following day.

Farquharson held out his hand, which I wrung. The young wife smiled at me as I turned away. The husband with his immovable face stood close to her; even in his dark, deep-set, honest eyes I could not trace the faintest touch of expression.

At the appointed hour I went to visit the Farquharsons in their pretty house. Mrs. Farquharson ran out to meet me—she looked young, childish, and beautiful. She said that her husband had not yet returned home, but she expected him back in a few moments.

"I hope you will like the house," she continued. "We are going to make a tennis-court here. Don't you think it a nice

house and wonderfully European?"

She spoke rapidly, but I did not fail to notice the strained expression in her eyes. Farquharson presently appeared, and we went to dinner. During the meal, I observed that the husband and wife furtively watched each other, that Mrs. Farquharson's face was white, and that she played with her food. Soon after dinner, she left us, and Farquharson uttered a sigh of relief.

"Sit where you cannot watch my face, Gilchrist," he said—"it is perfectly stiff just now with the effort to suppress emotion."

"Pray, don't think of me, my dear fellow," I replied. "Remember, I have seen you at your worst; I believe I can stand you now whatever you are likely to do."

"You have not been tried," he replied. He moved his chair as he spoke and sat facing out into the garden.

I bade the Farquharsons adieu at an early hour, thinking it likely that I might never meet them again. I went back to my hotel and finished making arrangements for my journey to the Central Provinces.

The next day I was busy, but immediately after dinner a servant came to inform me that an English lady was waiting to speak to me in one of the saloons. I went into the room, and Mrs. Farquharson stood before me. She greeted me with a slight cry and gesture of relief.

"You must help me," she said, in an eager voice; "I have borne it up to the very last point—I cannot endure it any longer." Her voice was low and almost breathless in its eagerness.

"What has happened since last night?"

I spoke in as cool and calm a voice as I could command. There was nothing for it but to make light of poor Farquharson's affliction to his wife.

"I was brave last night," she said; "to-night I am a coward. Mr. Gilchrist, my nerves won't endure it any longer. I have come to beg of you to do something for me."

"And that?" I asked.

"You are going to Jubbulpore to-morrow, will you take him with you? Without him my nerves may get stronger—after a time I may get accustomed to this horror and be able to endure it. Just after you left last night I went into the room, and I saw him smile. He was standing by the veranda, and he was smiling to himself—oh, it was fiendish. I slipped away, I do not think he saw me, but as I went down one of the passages I heard him laugh; his laughter echoed in the empty passage; it haunted me, I heard it all night. If this goes on much longer, I shall *hate him*!"

She said the words with remarkable emphasis. Her eyes were gleaming queerly, she was certainly by no means herself.

"When first you told me the whole dreadful history I thought I could bear it," she went on; "now I see it is beyond the strength of an ordinary woman. I am an ordinary woman. I love him well, but when he smiles at me I feel that I am looking at a devil. I wish I could go back to England. Whatever happens, we must live apart for the present.

Can you suggest anything? Even a fortnight's peace would be a boon."

"I will ask your husband to come with me to-morrow morning."

"But can you really bear his companionship?"

"Of course—in fact, I shall not mind it in the least."

This was not true, but I lied to the poor soul on purpose.

"I will go back with you now and see Farquharson," I said. "I will suggest to him that he comes straight away with me to-morrow. I expect to have some good sport; I doubt not he will enjoy the expedition."

"God bless you," she replied; "but please remember that he does not know that I came here. Can you manage to conceal the fact?"

"That being the case, you had better go back alone," I said, "and I will drop in incidentally in the course of the evening."

She left me, and about an hour afterwards I followed her. I found Farquharson on the veranda. Mrs. Farquharson was not in sight. He greeted me in his usual automatic style, but I knew by the pressure of his hand that he was glad to see me.

"It is good of you to call," he said. "I thought you would have no time on such a busy evening."

"I have come on purpose," I said. "I want you to come with me to Jubbulpore. I hate going on this sort of expedition by myself. Can you not manage to give me the pleasure of your company?"

"My company?" he said, with bitterness. "Are you sure of what you are saying? Why are you doing this thing, Gilchrist?"

"For various reasons; partly because I am a sociable person, and am convinced that you are a good shot; partly because I think the change will do you good (you will forgive me for saying that you look a bit hipped); and partly also because I am certain a short absence from your society will be of benefit to your wife."

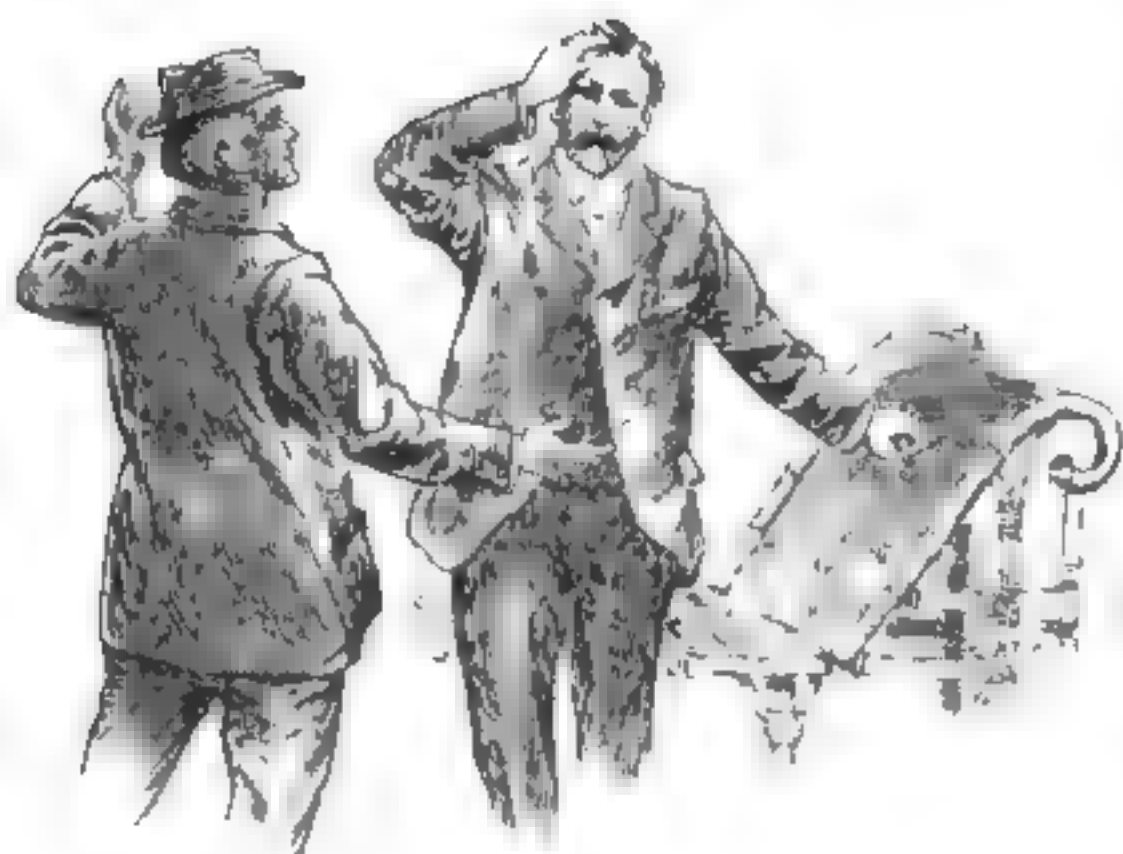
"Has she been complaining?" he cried, eagerly.

"Ask no questions," I answered. "Will you come or will you not?"

"I should like it of all things, and Lil could go to the Sullys. I could not leave her alone here. When do you start?"

"By the first train to-morrow morning. I have plenty of ammunition and rifles for us both."

"I have never been to Jubbulpore," he replied; "yes, I should like it. I will go and speak to Lil."



"WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS THING, GILCHRIST?"

"One moment first," I interrupted. "If you come with me, please understand that you can be, and I hope you will be, perfectly natural. When you wish to make grimaces, pray do so—when you wish to smile, smile freely, and also laugh when you are inclined. I want you to be natural—those are my conditions—will you grant them?"

He wrung my hand, his eyes spoke, though the rest of his face was immovable. He left the room.

In about five minutes he came back to tell me that the matter could be arranged, and that he and his wife would go at once to the Sullys, to ask if she might remain with them during his absence—in short, that I might expect him to join me at an early hour on the following morning.

There was no hitch in the way of this arrangement, and early next day Farquharson and I started for Jubbulpore. During our rapid journey I found my companion overcome by a melancholy so intense and profound that no effort could shake it off. He seldom spoke, and there was no chance of his inflicting his terrible smile upon me. I watched him with ill-concealed anxiety, and often sought an opportunity to beguile him into talking of his troubles—all in vain, he was in no mood to be communicative.

We spent a night at Jubbulpore and then went on to a small town in the vicinity, of the name of Morar. In the neighbourhood of Morar we should get the big shooting we were in search of. We had sent a telegram to Mrs. Farquharson during our journey, telling her that Morar would be our destination, and the following day a whole budget of letters arrived. There were some for me and

several for Farquharson. I saw his face change colour as he took one up and eagerly broke open the envelope. I guessed that it must be from his wife, and, going on to the veranda of the little hotel where we were staying, occupied myself reading my own correspondence. A sudden groan and stifled exclamation within the room caused me to quickly turn my head. I saw Farquharson seated by the breakfast-table, his face bowed in his hands.

"What is it, old chap? What is wrong?" I said, coming back to him and laying my hand on his shoulder. He did not shake me off, but neither did he make any reply. One or two more

deep groans escaped him, then he started to his feet.

"Look here, Gilchrist," he said, "I cannot talk of it. You had best know what is up by reading my wife's letter. God knows it is conclusive enough." He hurriedly left the room.

Mrs. Farquharson's letter was lying face downwards on the table. I took it up, and the following words greeted my eyes:—

DEAREST DICK,—It is not that I don't love you, but I am not strong enough to endure what you so constantly are obliged to inflict upon me. Neither, dear, can you bear it—you cannot stand the strain which must never be relaxed, and I cannot endure the constant suspense and the life of watching. I watch and watch to see *the devil come out in your face*, Dick, and Dick, dear, it is driving me mad. Please do agree that we shall live apart. Perhaps when I am older and stronger I may be able to bear what is now too much for me. Forgive me, Dick, and let me go. I shall return home by the next steamer—Your loving and most unhappy wife.

"Poor fellow! He had no right to marry her without telling her," I could not help commenting. I folded up the letter and then went in search of him.

He was standing under the portico, his hands thrust into his pockets, his eyes staring fixedly before him—his wooden face had never looked more absolutely wooden. When I approached he looked at me.

"Don't ask me to talk of it, Gilchrist," he said; "it is the sort of thing for which one has no words. I believe from my soul that Lil is right—she is best quit of me."

"You will telegraph to her—you will do something to stop this?" I exclaimed.

He shook his head.

"You must be mad," I cried; "you cannot consent to a separation without making some effort."

"I will atone, but not in that way. Forgive me, Gilchrist, I am in no mood for discussion; give me back the letter. Poor Lal! poor little girl!" His voice shook—the next moment he gave one of his terrible, nerve-jarring laughs.

"Merciful Heaven!" I could not help muttering to myself, "no wonder that young woman flees from him. He is the best of fellows, and yet to all intents and purposes he is little short of a monster."

His laughter kept on echoing and echoing. "Ha! ha!" I heard him saying. When he could recover himself, he turned to me, and spoke abruptly:—

"Have you arranged about the shooting?"

English sportsmen get rid of these terrors of the jungle. Hence the delight of the people at our arrival. This tiger had already killed twenty-seven inhabitants of the village. The natives were in a state of absolute panic, and were willing to put themselves altogether into our hands. They had many curious ideas with regard to the tiger, believing it to be possessed of unnatural power, and regarding it with superstitious awe. They were most anxious that it should die, but were unwilling to kill it themselves.

The chief of the party took us immediately to his hut, and very soon after our arrival one of the women of the tribe came to interview us. She had once been with a white lady as ayah, and could speak a little broken English. She told us that her husband and three children had been victims of the tiger—the poor creature was nearly mad with



"THE POOR CREATURE WAS NEARLY MAD WITH TROUBLE."

"Yes," I replied. "There is a small village called Rhanpore, about twelve miles from here, where good tiger-shooting is generally to be had. Shall we go there?"

"Yes, and immediately," replied my companion. He went into the house, calling back to me to get ready as quickly as I could.

Half an hour afterwards we were off. Rhanpore was a small hamlet, in the very thick of the swamp or grass jungle. The chief of the little village came out to welcome us with enthusiasm, the reason for which was soon made plain. There was a man-eating tiger in the vicinity. The Hindus know well the pluck and avidity with which

trouble, and gave us to understand that if we could get rid of the brute, she would regard us ever after as gods. Knowing that none of the tribe would dare to kill the monster, she looked upon our arrival as an interposition of God.

"We will have a try for the brute, and at once," said Farquharson, his eyes gleaming queerly in his head. A glance showed me that he was in the mood to do desperate deeds, and on this occasion I did not feel inclined to balk him.

"We will go into the jungle at once," I said; "how many men can go with us?"

But here an unexpected difficulty arose.

None of the inhabitants of Rhanpore were willing to run the risk.

"You do not expect us to undertake the destruction of so dangerous a brute alone?" I asked the chief. "Will no one accompany us?"

Several men who stood round shook their heads.

"All right, we will go for the beast by ourselves," said Farquharson.

Just then a tall, good-looking young Hindu touched me on the arm.

"I will show you the tread," he said. "Let us start at once; the tiger never comes out until evening, so there is no danger of meeting him now. You can go and have a shot at him presently, if you like."

In less than half an hour, well provided with ammunition and our rifles, we set forth.

"This promises to be something like sport," said Farquharson to me.

I made no reply—we were crushing down the long jungle grass as we walked. Suddenly he spoke again.

"I have been thinking over that letter of Lil's."

"God knows you have," was my internal reply. I said nothing in words.

"And the more I consider it, the less I like it," continued the poor fellow. "I see plainly that she cannot put up with me; and, mind you, I am not a scrap surprised, nor do I blame her in the very least. I did wrong to marry her, and my just punishment has come upon me. But a girl who is separated from her husband, from whatever cause, however innocent, has a hard time in this censorious world. Now, if death——"

"Oh, come, none of that," I said, interrupting him almost roughly; "we have no time just now to think even of your most absorbing affairs—we carry our lives in our hands; a man-eating tiger is no pleasant monster to meet, and if I am not mistaken, this is a tiger's tread."

I looked upon the grass, which was torn and broken asunder. At the same moment the Hindu fell on his knees. He began to examine the grass and to sniff. Then he faced round and spoke.

"Here is the tiger tread," he said; "he comes nightly right through here, and goes to the pool there to the right to drink."

As the man spoke, he bent slightly forward and appeared to be listening.

"Do you hear anything?" I asked of him.

"Only the snapping of a twig," was the reply; "the tiger will not come out until to-night; we are safe, but this is his tread."

Again he bent and listened. Suddenly I noticed a queer change coming over his face—he glanced from Farquharson to me, and the next moment, before I had time to address a word to him, disappeared. I was just bending down to see where he had gone when a sudden and violent shock threw me to the ground, and my rifle was dashed from my hand: a huge tiger had leapt over me and was following the Hindu.

"Up a tree, for goodness sake, Farquharson," I gasped; "the brute will be on us in a moment." I rushed for my rifle, but before I could secure it, the tiger had turned and was making for me. A tree was near: I made for it and managed to climb up just in time. My sudden disappearance evidently puzzled my foe. He stopped, looking from right to left. I glanced round, and saw to my relief that Farquharson had also taken refuge in a tree. With the minuteness with which one does notice small particulars even in moments of extreme peril, I observed that the tree my friend had climbed into was almost too slight to bear his weight—he had established himself in a narrow fork, and was clinging on with one hand, holding his rifle with the other. I, unarmed, had taken shelter in a taller tree. My rifle lay quite ten yards away. As tigers are seldom climbers, I hoped that for the present we were both safe. I bent cautiously forward, therefore, to get a good view of the beast, who was standing still, glancing round him.

He was a full-grown tiger, of great beauty—a glint of sunshine had struggled through the thick, overhanging trees, and lit up his tawny coat. It is the nature of the tiger never, except on very rare occasions, to look up. He did not look up now, but he evidently suspected something, and also doubtless smelt us, for he made a sudden halt under the tree in which Farquharson was hiding. He now began to sniff the air, turning his head slowly first to right and then to left. I dared not utter a word, but I noticed, to my horror, that, owing to the smallness of the tree, Farquharson's legs were only from four to five feet off the ground. If the brute did happen to see him he would be in extreme danger of being torn from his hiding-place. For a moment I wondered that he did not fire, but then it occurred to me that he was acting wisely in not doing so. If he missed his prey, the tiger would turn, and in mad fury try to claw

him from the tree. The best chance for both of us was to remain motionless, trusting that the animal would presently stalk on in search of the water which he was coming to drink.

At that moment a covey of partridges, evidently disturbed by my possession of the tree, rose with shrill cries above my head and flew away. The tiger, attracted by the noise, raised his tawny eyes and followed them in their flight. He left his position under the tree, walking forward a few paces. At the same instant I saw Farquharson raise his rifle and fire. He shot the brute in the side, rolling him over. My first impression was that he had killed his game. Now was my chance to descend quickly and fetch my rifle. I was just about to do so when the beast, whom I had supposed to be dead, quivered violently and staggered to his feet. He uttered a loud growl, and, turning his bloodshot eyes, saw Farquharson in the tree. With a supernatural effort the wounded animal made straight for my friend—he sprang at Farquharson, and drove one of his great claws deep into the poor fellow's leg just above the knee. The flesh was immediately ripped down to the ankle, and then the brute stood growling, showing his teeth, and preparing for a further spring.

"Hold on, for Heaven's sake. I will get to him," I cried.

"No, I have him; it is all right," was answered back. The mouth of the beast was open—I saw Farquharson deliberately place the rifle between his teeth and fire. This ought to have finished the brute, but the bullet must have come out in the cheek, for the tiger only uttered growls of agony and rage, and making another spring, managed to wound Farquharson once again, clutching his leg higher up and tearing the flesh in a most horrible manner.

I leapt to the ground and had all but secured my rifle, when the tiger saw me. He wheeled round, made a sudden spring, and pinned me to the earth. Another instant, and all would have been over if I had not remembered my knife. I wrenched it from my belt and drove it deep under the brute's left ear, and with all my power severed his throat right across, cutting through the jugular vein; he stretched himself out, fell forward, and died. It did not take me an instant to

regain my feet. I was shaken, but unwounded. I saw that Farquharson was fainting from loss of blood.

"Cheer up, old chap, we have done for him," I cried. "Here, have a nip of this brandy." I managed to pour a little into his mouth, and then helped him down from the tree, but he had scarcely set foot upon the ground before there was renewed hemorrhage, and he sank back fainting.

Just then I felt myself touched from behind, and looking back saw the dusky face of the Hindu woman close to me. She held something in her hand, and pushing me away, knelt down by Farquharson and put some drops of liquid between his lips.

"Give me that handkerchief which is round your head," I said; "I must bind it round his leg and make a tourniquet to stop the bleeding."

She handed me her large, gaily-coloured



"THE ANIMAL DROVE ONE OF HIS GREAT CLAWS DEEP INTO THE POOR FELLOW'S LEG."

handkerchief without a word. I did what was necessary for Farquharson, the woman watching me silently. The light was now failing fast, but I saw through the brightly-coloured grasses of the jungle several more dusky faces peeping curiously at us. Amusement, horror, delight, were reflected on every countenance—the dead tiger lying in our midst was enough. Without uttering a word the natives came forward and helped me to carry Farquharson back to the village.

It is needless to say that we were the heroes of the hour, but I had little thought for anything but the terrible condition of my poor friend. I dreaded blood-poisoning, the result almost invariably of all bad tiger wounds, and in the morning saw from the high delirium and rapidly rising temperature that it had actually set in. I had none of the necessary remedies with me, and did not think it likely that Farquharson would survive. The native woman, Rhanee Mee, had instituted herself his nurse.

"His life will be spared," she said, many times. "We have certain cures for tiger wounds in the jungle—we can soon check the fever."

I have a great belief in these remedies, handed down as they are from parent to son, and containing the germs, many of them, of our own most valuable medicines; but I perceived, to my consternation, that they had little or no effect upon Farquharson. Whether his state of nervous depression before the accident had an unfavourable effect upon him now I cannot say, but notwithstanding the skill of the Hindu, nothing could check the inflammation and fever.

Two or three days passed away, and my friend's condition was almost hopeless.

I was pacing about just outside the chief's hut, and wondering whether Mrs. Farquharson had already sailed for England, and what her feelings would be when the appalling news of her husband's terrible death reached her, when a clear English voice sounded on my ears, and, turning with a startled movement, I saw Farquharson's wife standing behind me.

"By all that is wonderful, how have you come here?" I cried. She held up her hand to interrupt me.

"Never mind that part now," she said; "I have come. They told me at Morar of the accident—is he alive?"

In her travelling dress, her face deadly pale, her eyes red as if she had been weeping; distraught, worn, and weary, I should scarcely have recognised her for the bright,

young-looking girl whom I had first seen on board the *Crocodile*. She came close to me.

"Is he dead?" she asked again. She did not wait for me to reply—but continued, speaking in a wild and yet automatic voice: "Listen. Since I wrote that letter I have been nearly mad. My misery and remorse grew beyond words. I suddenly made up my mind to follow you both to Jubbulpore. From Jubbulpore I came on to Morar—there the awful news of the accident and his dangerous illness met me. Now tell me, is he alive? I can bear it, but I must know the truth—is he living?"

"Just," I answered. "You must be prepared, Mrs. Farquharson, to see him greatly changed."

"I do not mind that if only his life may be spared. Now take me to him."

She held out her hand.

We went to the hut, in the door of which Rhanee Mee, the black woman, was standing.

"Rhanee," I said, "this is the memsahib, the good sahib's wife. She has come all the way from Bombay to see him."

Rhanee Mee fixed her lustrous eyes on the white girl—the two exchanged long glances.

"Can you understand English?" asked Lil.

The black woman nodded.

"And you have nursed him?"

She nodded again.

"Then I will tell you everything. I have been a bad wife to the sahib—I have tortured him for that which he could not help. Save him for me—bring him back from the gate of the grave—do what you can. I must show him how sorry I am."

Rhanee Mee's face grew graver and graver.

"The sahib is bad to-night," she said, in a solemn voice; "his fever does not yield to the remedies of our tribe—it may be that he will not recover." Then she glanced again at Lil, who stamped her foot in agony.

"He must recover, Rhanee Mee," she cried. "I have often heard of the skill of your people. Use your great skill now, and give him back to me."

"I have done nearly everything," said the black woman. "I have tried nearly all our remedies."

"Nearly, but not quite?" said Lil.

"There is one thing left."

"Then use it; don't delay."

"There is one thing left," repeated Rhanee Mee, "but I was keeping it for myself against the day of my own extremity." She looked again at Mrs. Farquharson, gave her a queer

and incomprehensible smile, and turning went back into the hut.

In a moment she came out again, holding in her hand a curiously-carved box.

"Open it," she said, pushing it into the hands of the wife.

Mrs. Farquharson did so. Inside there lay what appeared to be a solitary pearl of large size and beauty.

"That pearl is hollow," said Rhanee Mee. "Within there lies a medicine more potent than anything I have yet used for the sahib. Take it, memsahib—I give it to you because you love him. Take it and try it. If anything can bring him back from the grave, that will."

Mrs. Farquharson's face grew whiter and whiter. Holding the box in her hand, she stared at Rhanee Mee.

"Go at once," said the woman, with an imperious gesture; "he is lying there inside the hut, go to him. Crush the pearl and then hold it to his nostrils. Let him inhale the fragrance. What is within is the most potent thing in all the world.

That pearl has cost many lives: it was taken from a neighbouring tribe with which our tribe was at war. It was given to me by my husband—I was to use it in my last extremity. The sahib avenged the life of the one who gave it to me—the extremity has come—the sahib shall have the medicine."

Lil seemed to understand at last. She shook herself as if out of a sort of stupor, and, not even waiting to thank Rhanee Mee, went into the hut. I followed her.

Farquharson was now lying in a state of complete collapse, his eyes were closed, his face was ghastly, his breath came at longer and longer intervals from his parched lips. He did not hear his wife's step or see her when she came into the darkened space. She knelt by the couch—I stood behind.

"Dick," she cried, bending forward and pressing her lips to the forehead of the dying man. "I could not do what I said I

would. I could not leave you—I have come back to you again. Smile or no smile, I cannot do without you; I have come back to you."

"Tell her to break the pearl, there is not a moment to lose," said Rhanee Mee.

"Do what she tells you," I whispered. "Break it and hold it to his nostrils."

Her fingers trembled, but she did what I told her. She crushed the hollow pearl, and



"I HAVE COME BACK TO YOU AGAIN."

immediately a gas, curious and volatile, escaped. It filled the room with a queer perfume—the sick man immediately opened his eyes.

"Why—Lil!" he said, with a smile.

He closed them again.

"He smiled," said Mrs. Farquharson, looking round at me. "He smiled like *anybody else*." She fell forward in a fainting fit.

Facts are stronger than theories. Just as there was no apparent reason for the subjective symptoms which comprised Farquharson's horrible malady, so neither was there any cause known why the shock which the tiger's wounds had inflicted should get rid of it. Such, however, was the case; he not only recovered his bodily health, but the dreadful grimaces and unnatural laughter never again troubled him. He laughs now as heartily and pleasantly as any man I know, and his smile, Mrs. Farquharson says, is like sunshine.